

New website streamlines lab product searches

Meredith Salisbury

January 2021—When COVID-19 struck and much of the U.S. went into lockdown, Russ Wedemeyer spotted a problem: Pathologists and laboratories lost access to sales reps and sales reps access to them. These connections were casualties of the pandemic, and Wedemeyer saw an opportunity.

A veteran of the clinical diagnostics industry, Wedemeyer leads a consulting team designed to help small companies with sales and marketing resources. When COVID-19 hit, he pulled together a roundtable about how lockdowns were affecting clinical labs and vendors alike. The feedback was clear: This went far beyond an inconvenience. Clinical lab teams were struggling to keep up, particularly as SARS-CoV-2 diagnostics flooded the market.

“With COVID-19, I couldn’t see in a million years how people were going to get in and do a sales call now,” Wedemeyer says.



Wedemeyer

CAP TODAY publisher Bob McGonnagle, too, saw the problem. The cancellation of live meetings compounded the difficulties. His discussions with Wedemeyer fostered a collaboration. They conceived of a new channel that would allow clinical labs and vendors to connect.

Within months, Wedemeyer and his team designed GreenarrowDx, a new website on which vendors can list their offerings for free and pathologists and others in labs can find useful content quickly. Wedemeyer’s group worked with CAP TODAY and its readers to ensure the website met mutual needs.

The website (greenarrowdx.com) serves as a directory on steroids, listing instruments and reagents across categories: surgical pathology, clinical chemistry, microbiology, LIS/billing, blood bank, hematology, automation systems, and point of care. There’s also a complete list of COVID-19 diagnostics that have received FDA emergency use authorization. Users can search by product type or vendor name and view information about assay metrics, instrument size and throughput, CLIA status, and more. Checkboxes allow users to select items of interest, compare them, and export them to a PDF file. Contact information for each vendor is available. Pricing data are not, because price often depends on many factors and must be tailored to each laboratory.

“The number one problem everybody has is searching for products,” Wedemeyer says, judging from the feedback he gathered at the project’s outset. “How do they find new diagnostics? Google search results are very messy and won’t be a curated list of the diagnostic tools, microscopes, or scanners that people are looking for.”

Wedemeyer’s team added new features to the site based on feedback from early-access users within the CAP. A search query called “Dr. Livingstone” makes it possible to submit questions about instruments, biomarkers, or anything else of interest and have someone on the website team do the research to find an answer. There’s also a live chat and a message board where users can ask questions and connect with one another.

Jim Kathrein, a senior commercial advisor who previously worked for BioFire Diagnostics, provided input on an early version of the GreenarrowDx website. “It gives the customer a really good feel for a vendor’s capabilities,” he says of GreenarrowDx. “Customers still love to interact with their vendors, and this allows them to continue to

connect.”

Kathrein says the site gives small vendors a chance to be noticed even if larger companies dominate the market because any company with a legitimate product can have it listed at no cost. “It allows both to get access and potential consideration for a sale,” he says. “It’s advantageous to both the large and the smaller companies.”

While GreenarrowDx was born out of the pandemic, it can be helpful well beyond it. “We spend so much time wandering through Google searches looking for ways to compare instruments,” says Maureen Basius, DO, chair of the pathology department at Hunterdon Hospital in New Jersey and an early-access user of the website. “This has really streamlined things and made it so serviceable. It’s comprehensive and thorough.”

Dr. Basius works at a community hospital and says smaller facilities like hers tend to “get lost in the shuffle” when vendors send out sales reps. “Even before COVID-19, our visits from vendors were few and far between,” she says. She believes the GreenarrowDx site will help her lab stay competitive with larger institutions by providing the kind of detailed information she previously had difficulty finding. Already she used the site to select a backup SARS-CoV-2 test to complement her lab’s initial offering in case of reagent or supply shortages.

When she originally heard about the idea from Wedemeyer, Dr. Basius recalls, “I thought, ‘That’s genius.’ And the place to run it is the CAP because that’s who the pathologists trust most.”

Meredith Salisbury is a writer in the New York City area.