

LAB TESTS ONLINE-UK ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Lab Tests Online-UK Mission Statement

'To increase patient understanding of laboratory tests empowering them to become active partners in their own healthcare'

Lab Tests Online-UK (labtestsonline.org.uk (LTO-UK)) is an online resource designed to provide patients and carers with easy-to-understand information about clinical laboratory tests.

It is peer reviewed: LTO-UK is written by practicing laboratory doctors and scientists with assistance from lay advisory specialists to help members of the public understand the many clinical laboratory tests that are used in the diagnosis, monitoring and treatment of disease.

It is non-commercial: LTO-UK does not search for nor receive commercial sponsorship. Support is generously provided by the Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine (ACB), the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS) and the Royal College of Pathologists (RCPATH).

It is patient-centred: Its primary role is to help patients find easy to understand information on laboratory tests for particular diagnoses, conditions or diseases.

Management structure

The LTO-UK Board is accountable to the ACB through the Director of Communication and Publications.

Board members 2017

Chair: Dr Danielle B Freedman

Treasurer: Dr William J Marshall succeeded by Dr Michael Bosomworth in December 2017

Managing Editor: Dr Sally Stock

Technical Lead: Stuart Jones

Marketing and Promotion: Rebecca Powney

Patient Liaison: Professor Jonathan Kay

Patient Advocate: Dr Patricia Wilkie

IBMS representative: Nick Kirk

Royal College of Pathologists representative: Dr Tom Butler

Administration: Dragana Landup-Horgan

An editorial team and managing editor work under direction of the management board and are responsible for the website content. All editorial work is done on a voluntary basis. Six new editors and one new lay editor have been recruited during 2017, which will enable content across all disciplines of laboratory medicine to be reviewed more frequently. The full list of contributors can be found on the website.

Principal Editors

Dr Brian Payne (news editor)
Dr Tom Butler (haematology)
Dr Charles Van Heyningen (biochemistry)
Dr Matthew Buckland (immunology)
Christopher Holmes (microbiology)
Dr Laura Dexter (virology)
Dr John Schofield (histopathology)
Dr Nicole Corriette (GP representative)
Dr Ian Godber (website comments advisor)

Historical context

The Lab Tests Online concept originated in the USA and was developed into a website by the American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC) and launched in 2001. The UK laboratory profession recognised the potential of this site at an early stage and senior members of the ACB were successful in obtaining sufficient funding from the Health Foundation and the Department of Health (England) to develop a UK site. LTO-UK, with 1,800 pages, was launched by the Minister of Health, Rosie Winterton in June 2004.

The number of visitors to the site grew rapidly and LTO-UK is now part of an international collaboration of fifteen countries reaching patients throughout the world.

Communications and interest come from the public across the spectrum of health literacy with approximately 15% of visitors being healthcare professionals. While the site adopts a language and presentation style appropriate for easy public communication, where possible, the test and disease information provided reflects the different needs and expectations of all visitors.

The website

The LTO-UK team monitor site activity and identify the popular pages, search engines and links that carry visitors to the website. The content of the site continues to grow and evolve and is reviewed and updated at regular intervals. The independent and professional approach of LTO-UK (which has no commercial allegiance) with review of content by NHS professionals in the relevant laboratory speciality is increasingly what separates it from other information sites.

A major achievement this year included the launch of a new modern, mobile friendly website design. On 20th December 2017, Lab Tests Online launched a redesign of LTO-UK. The redesign was initiated by Lab Tests Online for its global partners on the US platform. This is the first major redesign since its initial debut in 2001.

Lab Tests Online has served its 325 millionth user since the initiative started in 2001. The Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) planning commenced prior to launch to minimise normal traffic declines associated with migrating to a new platform and launching a new design.

Hit rate has been stable throughout 2017 at around 200,000 visitors per month. Approximately 66% of visits are from organic searches (primarily Google) with 23% from referral sites (primarily NHS Choices) and 11% from direct hits. It is envisaged that transition to a responsive design platform will improve search ranking on sites such as Google leading to an increase in hits via organic search, although an initial drop in visits is expected during the transition from the old site.

We continue to expand the number of third party systems who use integrated links to LTO-UK and whilst this is currently responsible for a relatively small number of visitors to the site, we envisage this growing rapidly as the NHS England Patient Online programme moves forward.

The following GP systems currently have or are developing integrated links to LTO-UK: TPP (SystemOne), HealthFabric, iSOFT, OMNI lab, INPS, Microtest, DrDoctor, i-Patient and Manage your health (app). In addition we continue to promote LTO-UK via : NHS Choices, ULCH OCS, the Welsh National Order Communications Project and Choosing Wisely UK (in process).

The LTO-UK team are working with the ACB Scientific Committee and the Royal College of Pathologists to push for new mandatory standards in GP Information Systems that display results directly to patients.

The LTO-UK app has had 23,294 downloads since its launch in June 2013. However, with a new mobile friendly design the app will be discontinued at the end of February 2018. With the development of the new responsive design website format access from mobile and tablet devices will be significantly improved. Since the vast majority of mobile and tablet users access the site via browsers rather than the app Lab Tests Online decided to discontinue the app. LTO-UK supported this as it will allow us to concentrate limited resources on other aspects of development and marketing.

The LTO-UK website ceased publishing new and reviewed content from 5 June until 20 December 2017 due to the increased resource required to implement the new site.

Total tests: 302

Sessions: 2,848,450

Total conditions: 114

Users: 2,137,251

New pages developed: 6

Page views: 6,378,105

Pages reviewed: 35

International profile

LTO-UK editorial board has been successful in working with the AACC in promoting the adoption of Lab Tests Online in countries across the world – initially in Europe and now further afield in Australia, China, South Korea, Brazil and Turkey. Currently, there are 15 international sites using 13 languages. Many non-UK sites initially based their material on that available on the UK site. The editorial developments are discussed at two global editors' meetings. In July 2017, Dr Danielle Freedman represented LTO-UK at the LTO Global Editors Meeting in San Diego, USA. The costs were met by the organisers. There was no representation at the editors' meeting in Athens in June 2017 due to high costs and technical problems for the conference call.

Closer to home

LTO-UK has taken opportunities in educating the public and healthcare leaders through the media, meetings and conference platform. LTO-UK has also been included in or the feature of a number of publications.

Publications featuring LTO-UK in 2017

In the February issue of *'The Mirror'*; *'Ask Dr. Miriam'* featured a question on blood test patient education and referenced the LTO-UK website.

In March, a medical newspaper *'The Medical Independent'* featured an article by Dr Peadar McGing: *'A results business: Empowering patients with the information they need'*. The article was aimed at doctors in Ireland and noted LTO-UK as a reliable resource for information on laboratory tests.

The April issue of the *'ACB News'* featured the article *'LTO-UK at the NAPP Conference'* by Iain Woodrow, an article sharing the success of the marketing and promotion team attending this conference.

The September edition of *'Which?'* member's magazine featured the article *'Help your GP to help you'* providing the reader with an insight into GP appointments and how patients can maximise their time with the GP. The article featured 'Useful websites recommended by GP's' and included LTO-UK as one of only five recommended and trusted websites.

An online magazine from *'Leukaemia CARE'* featured the article *'Tests used in the treatment of Acute Myeloid Leukaemia'* by LTO-UK board member, Dr Tom Butler, and was aimed at the practicing and aspiring haematology nurses. Also featured in this magazine was an advert for the LTO-UK website.

In November, The Practice Managers Association monthly e-newsletter featured an article by LTO-UK Marketing and Promotion team member Iain Woodrow. The article was entitled 'All you ever wanted to know about medical lab tests but were afraid to ask' and the e-newsletter is sent to 25,000 subscribers and a link to the article maintained online:

<https://practicemanagersuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/LTOL-PMA-newsletter-piece-.pdf>

The Department of Health's Information Strategy (2012) has set a ten year framework for transforming information provision that will enable patients and the public to have more control of the health and care information they need and access to it online. This strategy is further supported by evidence from Patient Online, which has already identified key benefits that directly relate to the work of LTO-UK including:

- **Expanded health knowledge for patients:** Better information can empower patients and carers, leading to increased health knowledge and health literacy. In turn, this can improve levels of patient satisfaction and wellbeing. Accessing online records means that patients can review up-to-date and relevant information pre- or post-consultation (including out of hours). This increases meaningful interaction and more shared decision-making between patients and their health professionals and encourages patient ownership of their own health and care.
- **Increased ability of patients to make more informed decisions:** Patients' satisfaction and wellbeing is increased by their ability to make more informed decisions about their health and care, facilitated by access to personal health records.

LTO-UK supports the Patient Online initiative and is engaging with users to improve the quality of their patient experience, by promoting the web site as an essential patient resource to enable better understanding of their care and encourage an informed dialogue with their healthcare professional.

News articles published on the LTO-UK website during 2017:

<https://labtestsonline.org.uk/news/worldwide-update-rapid-troponin-test-rule-out-heart-attack>, *Worldwide update on rapid troponin test to rule out heart attack*, 27 November 2017

<https://labtestsonline.org.uk/reflex-downs-screening>, *Antenatal 'reflex' DNA screening for Down's syndrome*, 21 November 2017

<https://labtestsonline.org.uk/heart-attack-blood-test>, *Could a new blood test help rule out a heart attack more quickly?*, 16 October 2017

<https://labtestsonline.org.uk/news/lab-tests-online-uk-recommended-gps-which-magazine>, *Lab Tests Online-UK is recommended by GP's in WHICH? magazine*, 27 September 2017

<https://labtestsonline.org.uk/news/viral-dna-test>, *Viral DNA test successfully screened those at high risk of nasopharyngeal cancer*, 22 September 2017

<https://labtestsonline.org.uk/news/lithium-present-tap-water-may-protect-against-dementia>, *Lithium present in tap water may protect against dementia*, 14 September 2017

<https://labtestsonline.org.uk/news/blood-test-for-unstable-chromosomes>, *Blood test for unstable chromosomes can help predict the return of lung cancer*, 8 May 2017

<https://labtestsonline.org.uk/news/ltouk-nuffield-report>, *Lab Tests Online-UK is recommended in report published by the Nuffield Trust*, 23 January 2017

Conferences and events attended in 2017

Members of the LTO-UK board spoke and attended a number of events throughout the year including:

‘*BSH Annual Scientific Meeting*’ in Brighton

‘*ACB FOCUS*’ in Leeds

‘*The Annual Conference for the National Association of Patient Participation*’ in Basingstoke

‘*IBMS Congress*’ in Birmingham

‘*National Pathology Week*’ event in London

There has been overwhelming positive feedback from these events, increased networking opportunities and invaluable promotion of LTO-UK.

A good example of this is collaboration with the BSH. The BSH had provided LTO-UK with a free conference stand and promotion at their meeting in Brighton in value of £5k plus VAT.

Social Media

The @LabTestsUK twitter account grows steadily with currently over 1,074 followers. It provides the public with a direct route for engagement with our team and a social media platform for us to promote the website and actively engage with the public and key healthcare and laboratory peers.

The LTO-UK facebook page now has 1432 likes and is followed by 1425 people. Plans to amalgamate the Twitter and Facebook page are in process and this is hoped to boost coverage by both.

Reporting and analysis

The LTO-UK board monitor the progress of the website to measure success according to their business strategies set for the following three years (2017 –2019):

- **Site visits and App downloads**

- To increase annual traffic to the site by 10% year on year

In 2016 there were 3,064,649 visits to the website, in 2017 there were 2,848,450.

We did not meet the target of increasing traffic by 10% over the year due to traffic decline associated with migrating to a new platform but it is predicted that the new website platform will allow us to meet this target in 2018.

- To increase active users of mobile App downloads by 10% year on year

This target is no longer a required objective. The App is being discontinued as of end of February 2018 due to a new mobile friendly design.

- **Links with GP systems**

- To finalise work with INPS (patient portal application) – Completed

- Continue discussions with EMIS to integrate by 2018 – On-going

- **Champion recruitment and retention**
 - To double the number of LTO-UK champions by 2019 from 38 in 2016
In 2017 there were 80 new champions, exceeding this target and meeting it within one year.
 - To increase the proportion of non-laboratory scientists to 40% by 2019
In 2016 there were 14 non-laboratory champions out of 38 in total (37%). In 2017 there were 22 non-laboratory champions out of 80 in total. A decrease to 25% in non-laboratory champions in 2017, further work is planned to focus on non-laboratory champion recruitment including attendance at NAPP and RCGP (Royal College of General Practitioners) conferences.
 - To recruit patient Champions
In 2016 there were 9 patient champions. In 2017 there were 17 patient champions.
 - Send out Champion Newsletters quarterly – Target not met, plan to use new volunteer for this
 - Update literature following the website redesign – To be published in Q2 2018
- **Make up of Editorial Team**
 - To recruit 5 patient reviewing editors by the end of 2017 – One recruited in 2017, further work planned to increase these numbers in 2018
- **PR & Media coverage (on and offline)**
 - At least one article about LTO-UK in a non-laboratory professional magazine
 - At least one article/blog/electronic journal in a non-laboratory digital publicationBoth targets were met as described in ‘Publications featuring LTO-UK in 2017’ on page 4 of this document.
- **Social Media impact and reach**
 - Twitter: to increase by 10% year on year
In 2016 there were 850 followers. In 2017 there were 1,074 followers. An increase of 26%.
 - Facebook: to increase by 10% year on year
In 2016 the page had 1338 likes, increasing by 7% to 1,432 likes in 2017.

The future

LTO-UK objectives for the next three years:

- to continue to implement the business plan¹
- to increase annual traffic by at least 10% year on year
- to ensure that GPs have direct links from their surgery to LTO-UK website
- to monitor and assess LTO-UK impact in primary care setting.
- to increase links with other public facing websites, e.g. national health related charities and others
- to secure permanent funding to support these activities
- to work with GP and patient record system suppliers to further integrate LTO-UK into patient facing applications.
- To work with the ACB and RCPATH to push for mandatory standards for systems that display test results directly to patients.

¹LTO-UK Business plan 2017-2019

Financial details

LTO-UK does not search for nor receive commercial sponsorship. This is considered to be important to assure all users of our independence.

LTO-UK is administered through the Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine and does not publish separate accounts. These are included within the Association's audited accounts. It had a nominal balance at the beginning of the year of £49,001. Total expenditure (excluding VAT) was £28,509. The major items of expenditure are the salary of the part-time administrator and the licence fee payable to the American Association for Clinical Chemistry. Total income was £30,000. The ACB contributes to the project both financially and through the provision of additional administrative support as required, and by providing accommodation for meetings, to a total of £10,000; grants of £10,000 each were made by the Institute of Biomedical Science and the Royal College of Pathologists. The closing balance (31 December 2017) was £50,491. We are having discussions with patient groups and other professional organisations with a view to securing long term funding. These figures are provisional end of year figures, pending audit.

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