

Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans, LA

How a charity hospital got a leg up in
electrophoresis efficiency
Sebia system boosts processing time for New Orleans med center



Charity Hospital, New Orleans

In a city that practically implores people to sit back, relax and wile away the hours, there's at least one group of professionals that doesn't believe in "downtime."

Of course, no one would expect the Medical Center of Louisiana to be anything less than fully engaged in work every second of every day. But even an organization that's accustomed to always being "on" has to find new ways to get more from every hour. And the med center's Special Hematology Lab has done just that by implementing Sebia's HYDRASYS[®] electrophoresis system.

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Dr. Gary Lipscomb, Pathologist

This "walkaway" solution automates agarose electrophoresis for protein, immunofixation and iso-enzymes. The result? Techs spend less hands-on time with the process...that means less time "waiting" through each step and ultimately, more capacity to handle growing test volume. With manpower in the lab

already stretched ultra-thin, the concept of "hands-free" has become an essential feature rather than a simple luxury.

"Electrophoresis used to be performed in two different labs on our campus," explains Mary Jo Gessler, Medical Lab Supervisor 1 in the Special Hematology Lab. "But in a major restructuring of the state medical system, all of this workflow was consolidated into our Special Hematology Lab."

Aided by newfound automation and speed via the HYDRASYS, Mary Jo and her colleagues can now process significantly more samples each day with their increased workload - a dramatic improvement over the previous manual methods. Using a simple keypad on the instrument, technologists can almost effortlessly carry out all phases of the process, from sample application to migration to incubation to staining, destaining and drying.

"It appears that Sebia took a lot of input from technologists when designing this instrument," Mary Jo says. "The software seems to mirror the way technologists think, whereas other systems were more complicated and looked as if they were designed by computer engineers rather than actual users. With those others, it's almost like you'd have to know a secret handshake to make sense of the computer graphics or menus. But Sebia designed the HYDRASYS based on a process that's logical to any technologist."

Though initially drawn to Sebia for the sophisticated technology, lab staff at the Medical Center of Louisiana has since uncovered a major advantage in Sebia's approach to customer service and product philosophy. Medical Technologist Darlene Tauzier notes that Sebia designed the HYDRASYS as a self-contained

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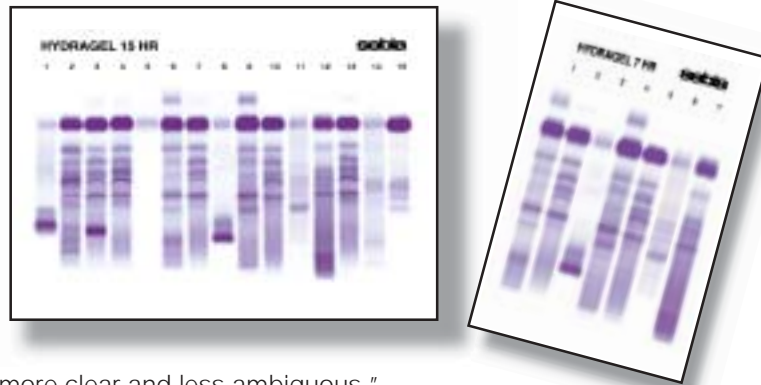
solution with all components including stains, gels and applicators, providing all-inclusive test kits. This simplifies the ordering process. "Other systems consisted of separate bits and pieces that were more difficult to keep track of in terms of inventory, and you always ran the risk of not having everything you needed," she explains.

"Also, Sebia has made it very easy for us to receive replacement items...we just call and say we need something, and it's shipped out immediately and is usually here the next day. We're not typically used to this because in a government institution, the purchasing process is a little more involved than in a private hospital. Many vendors don't seem to understand this, but Sebia has set up our account so that orders can be processed quickly. That's of paramount importance when you're dealing with testing that can't wait."

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Mary Jo Gessler, Medical Lab Supervisor 1, Special Hematology Lab

Among the hospital's routine order of supplies is the Sebia High Resolution assay, which the lab relies on for regular protein testing. The composition of the gel, the electrophoretic conditions, and the choice of stain allow for excellent resolution and high sensitivity, particularly in the gamma zone. Instead of the usual five or six fractions, this gel yields about 10 fractions, each containing one or more proteins.



"We often see things on the High Resolution gel that we might not normally detect on a 5-fraction protein gel," says Dr. Gary Lipscomb, pathologist. "Therefore, we feel the results are much more clear and less ambiguous."

The lab is also currently evaluating Sebia's CSF assay, which combines a high resolution electrophoresis with an immunofixation procedure. This design provides for detection roughly 100 times greater than the standard immunofixation - and guarantees that any banding identified is truly immunoglobulin based.

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In addition to keeping the lab well stocked with fast order fulfillment, Sebia also helps the lab maintain "uptime" by providing highly responsive technical support.

"The high level of support and service provided by Sebia's people has exceeded my expectations," Darlene

says. "Their technical staff is always efficient and very knowledgeable - I would say more so than what we have experienced from other companies. And in a healthcare environment, that can be a dealbreaker."

About the Medical Center of Louisiana

The Medical Center of Louisiana comprises two neighboring hospitals in downtown New Orleans: the historic Charity Hospital and University Hospital (formerly Hotel Dieu). Each has a rich history of service in this historic community. Charity predates the founding of the United States, opening in 1732 after Jean Louis, a French seaman and merchant who made New Orleans his home in the New World, died and bequeathed his estate to "establish and maintain a hospital for the poor people of New Orleans." By the time the Civil War began in 1860, Charity was one of the largest hospitals in the world, able to accommodate 1,000 patients at a time. University Hospital was founded in 1859 and, together with Charity, provided care for soldiers from both armies.

