

Memorial Hospital



Customer Focus

Memorial Hospital, Chattanooga, TN

Memorial Hospital Salutes Benefits Of In-House Electrophoresis

The revelation had the familiar ring of an age-old saying: Never send out patient samples tomorrow when they can be tested in-house today.

Memorial Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee came to this realization after routinely sending out electrophoresis work to an outside source. When the volume started increasing monthly, Memorial lab colleagues determined that too much money was going out the door with each outsourced test.

“We decided it would be more cost-effective to bring electrophoresis back in house,” explains Elaine Raines, MT (ASCP). “So we began reviewing automated systems, and honed in on three choices, one of which was the Sebia HYDRASYS.”

Raines and her colleagues were drawn to the HYDRASYS because of its clarity and ease of use. “The Sebia system is extremely user-friendly — more ‘hands free’ than the other systems we looked at,” she says. “The process is so automated that if a technologist starts a run and then suddenly has to pull away from that to take care of something else, another technologist can just take over in midstream without missing a beat. We’re not chained to the process.”

Because the HYDRASYS requires minimal attention and effort from technologists, there’s no longer a need for Memorial to send its electrophoresis work to another lab. But the automated system has done more than just eliminate the cost of outsourcing; the new efficiencies have enabled Memorial to create a healthy revenue stream by serving as a regional electrophoresis lab for other providers. The lab now processes a monthly average of 180-200 samples with 80-100 immunofixations.

“We’ve become a mini reference lab for this area,” explains Sandy Dixon, MT (ASCP). “We’re currently handling electrophoresis for approximately 350 to 400 physician offices, with a two to four-day turnaround.” She notes that this 48 to 96-hour window is a marked improvement over the one- to two-week timeframe provided by the lab that Memorial outsourced to in the past.

The Phoresis Imaging System was a big selling point for the Memorial lab team. “The scanner allows us to pick and choose specimens to scan from a single gel,” Dixon explains. “For example, under a protein configuration we want to avoid scanning urine, so



Sandy Dixon and Elaine Raines

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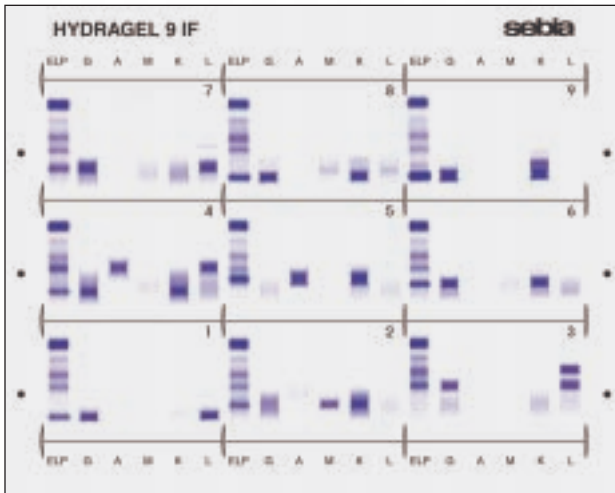


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we can program the system to scan 1 through 11 and delete 12 through 15 — and keep the specimens separate.”

Sebia’s premixed reagents have proven to be a big plus for the technologists. “The stains come in liquid form, so we don’t have to dissolve — or breathe in — messy powders,” Raines notes. “You just pour in the liquid, add water and go.”

Memorial went ‘live’ on the HYDRASYS and Phoresis in July 2000, and according to Dixon, the staff quickly felt ‘really comfortable’ with the system. “Setting up the gels couldn’t be easier,” she says. “The only challenging part for us was learning how to interpret the peaks. But it didn’t take long for us to develop expertise with this. I’m proud of how well we’ve done.”



Dr. Eric Schubert, a pathologist at Memorial, appreciates the clear and comprehensive reporting generated by the Phoresis.

“I particularly like the fact that it contains a graphical representation of the scan. I can interpret results at a glance.”

By using the data management search feature on the Phoresis, pathologists can

access the patient’s history of results to compare past and current results.

Memorial has been running Sebia’s 4-IF gel on the HYDRASYS, but plans to add the 9-IF gel to enhance efficiency. “We often have more than nine immunofixations to process in a day, so it makes more sense to go with the higher-capacity gels,” says Raines. “It will help conserve the technologists’ time.”

In the fast-paced, 24-hour environment, downtime is out of the question. Memorial Hospital’s lab staff has been pleased with the performance of HYDRASYS. “We’ve been operating the system daily for nine months and haven’t needed any maintenance,” says Dixon. “Sebia will conduct an annual maintenance check to ensure everything is in top shape.”

In a few instances, Dixon and her colleagues have relied on Sebia’s support team for assistance with interpreting ‘borderline’ results. “They were very responsive — we got an answer right away.”

About Memorial Hospital

Opened in 1952, Memorial Hospital is the result of one of the largest fundraising campaigns in the history of Chattanooga, Tenn. A group of local citizens, concerned about the shortage of hospital beds in the area, mobilized to raise \$3 million to build and equip the private, nonprofit hospital and help ensure healthcare excellence in the community. The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth have continued the awesome responsibility of hospital operations since Memorial’s inception 50 years ago.

At the time of its opening, Memorial Hospital had 180 beds and 35 bassinets. With improvements and expansions of its services and facilities through the years, Memorial is now licensed for 365 beds and offers a broad range of medical, surgical, diagnostic and therapeutic services on both an inpatient and outpatient basis.

