sebia® electrophoresis

ST JOHN® Health System

Customer Focus

St. John Hospital and Medical Center, Detroit, MI

Sebia Electrophoresis Gets High Marks From Teaching Hospital

There's no such thing as spring, summer or winter break for the core lab of a Wayne State University-affiliated teaching hospital. In fact, the tests keep being piled on.

St. John Hospital and Medical Center, part of Detroit's St. John Health System, had terrific success with marketing efforts to generate additional work for its Rapid Response Laboratory. But there was a down side: this newfound cornucopia put a great deal of strain on an already-lean lab staff.

"Our previous (manual) methodology worked fine when we were processing 18 patient samples for serum protein electrophoresis a day," says Edward Bessette, technical specialist for the lab. "But suddenly that number escalated to 35 or 40 — and that's a new ballgame entirely."

Through industry contacts, Bessette and his associates were already familiar with a couple of automated electrophoresis systems; they decided it was time to evaluate their options. Sebia's HYDRASYS® system and a competing solution were put to the test — and the HYDRASYS came out ahead.

Designed as a 'walkaway' system, the HYDRASYS expedites the many tedious steps involved in electrophoresis and immunofixation, automatically handling everything from sample application to migration to incubation to staining, destaining and drying.

Sebia's method of sample application scored big points with lab personnel because it relies on a wick instead of the traditional well. "With the HYDRASYS, the sample stays absorbed to the wick, so we don't run the risk of evaporation — which is a common problem with using wells," Bessette explains. "Now we can load one set of 15 samples, put them in the fridge while we load another batch, and not worry about them drying up in the meantime."

Bessette was also impressed with the gel quality of the HYDRASYS — not only for its clarity, but

"Hands-off' gel processing means technologists don't have direct contact with solvents that pose a health hazard."

—Edward Bessette, technical specialist, Rapid Response Laboratory

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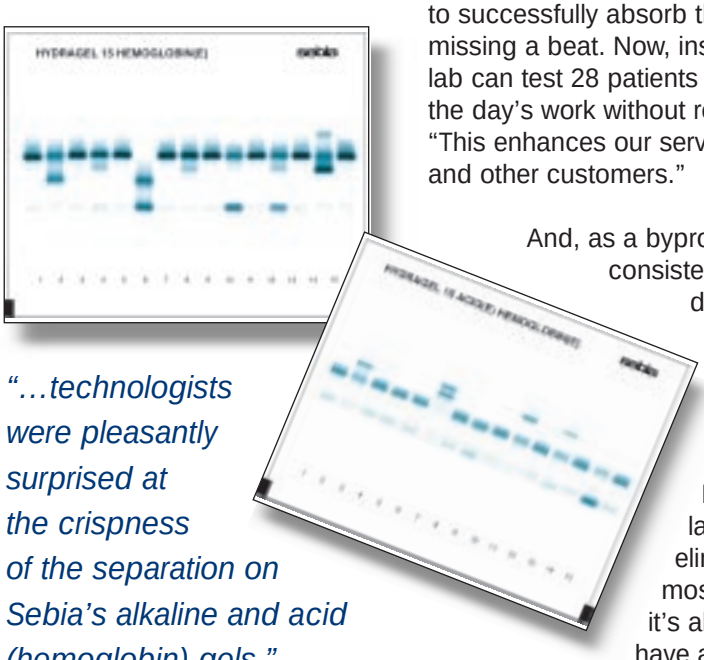
consistency as well. “Because the sample application does not rely on human skill, we get excellent uniformity of patterns from plate to plate, operator to operator,” he notes. “Now our people can focus their attention on other tasks instead of processing plates. We’re making better use of their time.” (And enhancing their safety too, he adds: ‘hands-off’ gel processing means technologists don’t have direct contact with methanol or other solvents that pose a health hazard.)

In terms of gel resolution, Sebia clearly exceeded the lab’s expectations; having been accustomed to edge effects and poor quality separation between hemoglobin A and hemoglobin F with previous methods, technologists were pleasantly surprised at the crispness of the separation on Sebia’s alkaline and acid gels. “Band resolution with Sebia far surpasses our previous system,” says St. John staff technologist Gloria Witczak.



“…technologists were pleasantly surprised at the crispness of the separation on Sebia’s alkaline and acid (hemoglobin) gels.”

Besides making lab techs happy, HYDRASYS also enabled St. John to successfully absorb their huge increase in workload without missing a beat. Now, instead of covering six patients in one run, the lab can test 28 patients per batch. “We can comfortably complete all the day’s work without rolling it over to the next shift,” Bessette says. “This enhances our service and reliability in the minds of physicians and other customers.”

And, as a byproduct of the outstanding clarity and consistency of HYDRASYS results, the lab has decreased the number of repeats — and thereby lowered its material costs. “The instrument allows us to get it right the first time, so we’re generating less waste and saving money on gels,” Bessette notes.

But in his view, the most important savings a lab can reap from this instrument is the elimination of wasted time. “Tech time is the most valuable commodity we have today…and it’s also the most scarce,” he says. “Now you have an opportunity to automate a laborious process, conserve manpower and at the same time reduce the chance of human error. Take it.”

About St. John Health Hospital and Medical Center

Established in 1952 by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Detroit, St. John Hospital is a regional-referral teaching hospital affiliated with Wayne State University. What began as a single institution five decades ago has evolved into a comprehensive health system with numerous locations and services serving southeastern Michigan.

Today St. John Hospital houses 50 medical and surgical specialties — including the only full-service pediatrics and perinatal center and designated Emergency Trauma Center on the city’s east side. Each year thousands of patients visit St. John for renowned expertise in heart disease prevention and treatment, high-risk pregnancy and neonatal intensive care. A state-of-the-art Cancer Center is slated to open in 2001.

In 1999, St. John Health System joined the Daughters of Charity National Health System to create Ascension Health, a collaborative health ministry that includes hundreds of health care facilities in 15 states and the District of Columbia.