

## **The Advantages of Oral Fluid Testing and Same-Day Results**

**By Adam Hall**

For many years lab-based urine testing was the go-to method for workplace drug testing. While this method maintains an important role in drug testing, there are some inherent issues with this process.

Today, employers should know that there are more options that may be better suited for their drug testing program. Technological advancements in recent years have greatly improved the reliability and accuracy of oral fluid testing, more specifically as a point-of-collection (POCT), rapid-result test. Adding oral fluid testing to your drug testing program provides many advantages and simplifies the drug testing process for employers, employees, and job applicants.

The list of advantages oral fluid testing provides is lengthy and the option of rapid oral fluid testing only adds to that list. The differences between urine testing and oral fluid testing are not always easily compared side by side. Instead, let's review some of the key advantages rapid oral fluid testing provides.

### **No Need for Collection Facilities**

The traditional method of urine testing typically requires an employer to send an applicant (or current employee) to an off-site collection facility. Not only does travel time to and from facilities need to be considered but wait times at these facilities can be more than two to three hours, not to mention the 24-plus hours needed to yield a result. Oral fluid testing eliminates the need to travel to an off-site facility as the employer can conduct a test virtually anywhere, including at the workplace or where job interviews take place.

### **Streamlined Collection Process**

Additional benefits from eliminating the need for a collection facility include the time it takes to conduct a collection. In fact, an oral fluid test generally takes 10 minutes to complete, which includes a result when using rapid-result testing. Also, all oral fluid collections are 100% observed, meaning the entirety of the collection process is conducted in view of the collector. This leaves very little opportunity for a donor to cheat an oral fluid test and allows the integrity of the overall process to remain intact.

### **Same-Day Results**

Nowadays, most employers are looking to hire applicants as quickly as possible. A rapid-result oral fluid result provides employers the ability to make a quick decision on whether an applicant can be hired. In many cases, applicants can begin work the very same day of their test. This doubles as a benefit to the applicant who is likely looking for employment as quickly as possible. Keep in mind, when a rapid oral fluid test result is positive, the employer has the option of sending the sample to a laboratory for confirmation testing and, ultimately, MRO verification. In other words, you sacrifice nothing in terms of the integrity of the drug-test process, thus ending up with an accurate, legally defensible result.

## **Recent-Use Detection**

The legalization of marijuana throughout many U.S. states has created some concern for employers regarding testing for marijuana. Unfortunately, a marijuana test that has a direct correlation to impairment is not available; however, oral fluid testing is ideal for detecting recent drug use. Oral fluid testing has the unique ability to detect the presence of drugs within minutes of an individual using an illicit substance. When considered with the window of detection for marijuana in an oral fluid sample, which is approximately 12 plus hours (approximately 24-48 hours for other drugs), then the test result will show only what that individual has used in a more relevant period. This feature of rapid-result oral fluid testing is especially useful when it is necessary to take immediate disciplinary action.

## **Cost Effective**

There are a few different costs associated with drug testing that an employer should consider when implementing a program. In a situation where an off-site collection facility is used, there is likely a collection fee attached to each test. Laboratories will also charge a fee for any sample sent to them for testing, and there may be additional fees for each test as well depending on how your program is set up.

Rapid-result oral fluid testing eliminates the need for off-site collection facilities. The simplicity of conducting a rapid oral fluid test allows most employers to perform their own in-house collections, which eliminates the collection fee completely. The overall cost for rapid oral fluid testing materials is considerably lower than their urine testing equivalent. Again, lab-based confirmation testing may still be necessary, but most rapid test results will be negative, creating additional savings for an employer.

And, of course, there is the cost savings that come from being able to make a same-day hiring decision, which greatly improves the candidate's overall experience and the employer's opportunity to hire the best possible job applicants.

## **Conclusion**

Rapid-result oral fluid testing is a viable alternative to traditional lab-based testing methods. Understanding the advantages of each testing methodology is critical when establishing a new program or improving an existing program.