

How FMOL Health has positioned Baton Rouge at the forefront of sepsis diagnostics

By Dillon Lowe



FMOL Health has become the first health system in the world to deploy a breakthrough sepsis diagnostic technology across a multiregion network of hospitals. Executives say the Baton Rouge-developed innovation is already reducing mortality rates, shortening hospital stays and improving emergency department efficiency.

The technology—[Cytovale's IntelliSep](#)—was first deployed at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in 2023 and is now in use across FMOL Health's hospitals in Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Monroe and Mississippi, according to Christopher Thomas, the health system's vice president and chief quality officer. Over the course of the next month, the health system will deploy IntelliSep at its freestanding facilities in north Baton Rouge and Livingston Parish, which are both considered communities of "critical need."

IntelliSep is designed to rapidly identify patients at risk of sepsis using a routine blood draw. In less than 10 minutes, the test can determine if white blood cells are behaving in a way that would indicate a septic patient. Sepsis, the body's extreme response to an infection, is a leading cause of death in U.S. hospitals.

Cytovale developed the technology in partnership with FMOL Health and researchers at Our Lady of the Lake, which was the first hospital in the world to deploy the test in a clinical setting. The partnership dates back to 2013, when Cytovale approached FMOL Health about participating in early-stage research.

Thomas says Our Lady of the Lake's scale and research infrastructure made it an attractive proving ground for the technology.

"The patient volume and the complexity of the hospital create an environment that startup companies are looking to partner with," Thomas says.

Through the years, the partnership evolved from a pilot study into a multicenter validation study that ultimately helped Cytovale secure FDA clearance.

Since deploying the technology systemwide, FMOL Health has seen a 20% reduction in mortality among patients with sepsis, a 19% reduction in mortality among patients without sepsis, a full-day reduction in hospital length of stay for high-risk patients and an 18% decrease in antibiotic exposure. Traditional sepsis screening methods rely on broad scoring systems that sometimes lead to unnecessary antibiotic use.

"These results are revolutionary," Thomas says. "It's the first process that's allowed us to both impact the lives of people who ultimately have sepsis and get a faster accurate diagnosis for people who ultimately do not have sepsis."

Thomas estimates the technology has saved roughly 30,000 hospital days across the FMOL Health system thus far by enabling patients to recover and discharge more quickly, opening up beds for others in need of care. He says that efficiency gain is effectively equivalent to standing up an additional 85-bed hospital.

Rolling the technology out across the entire health system required more than simply installing new equipment and training staff, Thomas says. It also required physician buy-in.

"Every physician is trained to be skeptical of any new technology," Thomas says. "At one point, physicians had to buy into using EKGs for people coming in with chest pain. ... You have to be able to explain the biology behind it."

FMOL Health has now begun fielding calls and site visits from health systems elsewhere in the nation interested in replicating its approach.

IntelliSep belongs to a newer class of tools known as host-response diagnostics, which analyze the body's immune response rather than searching directly for pathogens. Thomas predicts IntelliSep or similar technologies will soon see widespread adoption.

"Five years from now, I don't see people taking care of sepsis using combinations of early warning systems and clinical gestalt," Thomas says. "I see them using screening and then host-response diagnostics to then get to diagnostic accuracy."

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