CASE STUDY

Life Sciences: Xencor

Background

Xencor is a California-based biologic therapeutic company developing a broad pipeline of monoclonal antibody therapeutics. Their primary research relies on protein engineering to extend antibody half-life for therapeutic applications. At a time when antibody-based therapeutics could be the key to helping everybody get back to work, Xencor had to find a way to get 80 essential researchers back in the lab. Originating as a CalTech startup, Xencor has developed into a market leader in the immune-oncology field, partnering with industry leaders like Genentech, Alexion, Novartis, and Amgen. After 22 years they are now facing one of their largest challenges, keeping research moving forward amidst the COVID19 pandemic.

The initial response to the global pandemic from Xencor's CEO was to close the corporate office immediately. Laboratory operations changed to involved 2 separate groups, creating 6-day shifts to provide enough distance and allow for there to be 1 employee per lab space. Even though the lab was still operational, it was running at a limited capacity, far below pre-pandemic levels. Even with social distancing and enhanced cleaning standards, the risk of COVID spread still lurked in the employees and management's mind. This left Xencor's leadership with a crucial queston: how to continue conducting industry leading antibody research while keeping their 200 employees safe, 40% of whom work directly in the lab?

Considering testing options

Xencor needed to get their employees back to work quickly, but they strategically sought a testing strategy that would be reliable, practical, and future-proof. Given the world-wide shortage of molecular testing supplies, they wanted to make sure that they weren't using testing accessories that were already in short supply. To ensure employee compliance and ease safety concerns, they needed a test that was easy to administer on-site or at-home with a quick turnaround

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time. Finally, they wanted to make sure positive cases were caught early, before the virus was unknowingly spread, so they looked for a viral RNA test, rather than an antibody-based test.

Due to high demand, there has been a shortage of nasal swabs available for purchase by the testing community. Xencor wanted to do their part to help keep people safe and not disrupt the nasal swab supply chain to keep resources free for diagnostic testing. On top of that, nasal swabs can be uncomfortable and painful for some, requiring administration by a doctor or nurse. Therefore, Xencor looked to saliva tests, which have proven comparable to nasal swabs in recent publications. Because saliva tests are easier to use, their management felt confident that employees would be likely to comply with testing.

To prevent workplace spread, Xencor needed a test that is reliable and fast. Without reliable testing, there would be no way to catch the virus before infected individuals became symptomatic. Management was also concerned about asymptomatic carriers and the risk they posed to fellow workers. The test that would help provide them the information and peace of mind to open up would need to be able to consistently identify asymptomatic individuals – this meant that the test should detect the virus itself, rather than an antibody. Xencor's priority thus became identifying a test that could screen asymptomatic individuals and catch infected patients before they could spread the disease at work, which meant that rapid feedback was also essential to ensure the best quality work environment for their employees and lower the risk of infection.

DxTerity's industrial-grade testing platform was a great fit for Xencor

DxTerity's SafeWorkDx™ scalable corporate solution is the only testing solution that met all of Xencor's requirements and standards: easy to use, fast, reliable, and based on viral RNA.

SafeWorkDx uses a simple saliva test, so it is easy to use and does not place additional stress on the medical diagnostic supply chain. Employees simply spit into a collection cone at work or at home and send the sample via a pre-paid, pre-marked, overnight package. For those being tested at work, Xencor set up two workstations where people could spit and wipe things down, creating clean, safe testing environments right in their lab.

SafeWorkDx is also rapid, providing results 24-48 hours after testing. All test results are electronically reported and published to an employee portal to ensure timeliness of results. The software used is HIPPA compliant, with built-in AES encryption to protect employees' health data, keeping secure.

SafeWorkDx also allows for a scalable solution designed for medium to large size organizations based on their testing needs. Testing at regular intervals with rapid results can give employees and managers peace of mind when they return to the workplace that they are getting the best form of care and prevention.

Xencor + SafeWorkDx

With these necessities in mind, SafeWorkDx was an easy choice for Xencor. Each employee, since testing began on Memorial Day, is tested once a week, with multiple designated times a week to allow for the efficient administration of testing. Every employee can request additional testing if they desire to promote a healthy work environment. In general, Xencor employees have been very appreciative and complimentary about the process, said a senior director.

After the initial testing implementation, their employees' feedback was positive. Those who took the test agreed the testing process was simple and appreciated its ease of access. DxTerity has also been "incredibly responsive" to feedback as a testing partner, said a representative at Xencor. Dxterity's relationship with Xencor reflects their vision to promote the best quality of service for those who join them in their corporate testing solution.

Learn more about SafeWorkDx at
DxTerity.com/COVID-19

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