

TO18 Provider Focus Groups

Introduction (approx 10 minutes)

Good afternoon. My name is _____, and I am on the staff of _____. With me today is _____ of the TB Epi Studies Consortium, and _____ who is principal investigator of the larger study of which this focus group is part. **The study assesses the acceptability and usability of interferon gamma release assays for the evaluation of health care workers who routinely undergo serial testing for latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI).**

The need for improved testing for LTBI is clear. The tuberculin skin test (TST) is one of the oldest diagnostic tests still used in medicine, but it has significant shortcomings. Because of the limitations of the TST, there is great interest in the new generation of tests for the evaluation of LTBI. **These interferon gamma release assays (IGRAs), are expected to show greater sensitivity and specificity for determining if someone is really infected with the TB germ.**

The CDC recently **issued guidelines for use of the only IGRA** now commercially available in the United States, the QFT-G. These guidelines stated that the QFT-G may be used in all situations in which skin testing is currently performed. However, the guidelines also pointed out several areas in which **additional data regarding the performance of the blood tests are sorely needed, including how QFT-G functions in the evaluation of persons who routinely undergo serial testing for LTBI, such as health care workers.** The study of which this group is part responds to that research need.

We have invited you to participate in this focus group because of your experience with established and new TB diagnostic tests. **Your participation is voluntary, as stated in the consent form that each of you have. I'd like to review the form now.**

Discussion Guidelines

We would like the discussion to be informal, so there's no need to wait for us to call on you to respond. In fact, **we encourage you to respond directly to the comments other people make.** If you don't understand a question, please let us know. We are here to ask questions, listen, and make sure everyone has a chance to share.

We do want to get input from everybody, so I may ask directly for your views on a particular issue to make sure that all perspectives and opinions are included.

We are not so much concerned with pinning down facts; rather, our goal is to fully understand your experience and opinion. Please share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. We are just as interested in the diversity of your experiences and opinions as we are in what consensus there may be in your viewpoints.

We do ask that we all keep each **other's identities, participation, and remarks private.** We hope you'll feel free to speak openly and honestly.

As it says in the consent form, we will tape record the discussion, because we don't want to miss any of your comments. Only the study researchers will have access to these tapes and they will be destroyed after they have been transcribed. The tapes will be analyzed at Columbia University in New York.

I will be asking most of the questions today. Yael Hirsch-Moverman and Nick Deluca will be taking notes, and **may also ask some clarifying and follow up questions.**

Let's begin. Let's find out some more about each other by going around the room one at a time. **Tell us your first name and your professional position, the communities served by your practice, and how long you have been involved in diagnosing LTBI.**

Discussion Topic Questions

Rapport building stage (approx 20 minutes)

TST

1. In TB, we talk a lot about issues surrounding diagnosis of latent infection. Please tell us about your experience with using the TST to diagnose LTBI.
 - *Have you personally encountered any challenges around diagnosing latent TB infection?*
 - *What were the challenges?*
 - *How did you overcome these challenges?*

QFT-G

2. What were your **expectations** of the QFT-G test before you started using it?
3. What has your **experience** with the QFT-G been so far?
4. What do you like the **best** about using QFT?
5. What do you find most **challenging** about using the QFT?

In-depth discussion (approx 60-90 minutes)

Clinical encounter

6. How do you use the results of the QFT-G in a clinical encounter?
 - *How does it compare with your interpretation of the TST result?*
 - *Are there components of the QFT that are difficult to interpret?*
 - *Has any one experienced discordant results? How have you dealt with this issue?*
 - *Which test do you give more weight to, the QFT-G or the TST?*
7. How do QFT-G results (vs. TST) guide your treatment decisions?
 - *How is this different than using the TST?*
 - *Are such differences more important for some groups of patients? Probe for specific patient examples*

Patient reactions

8. How do you think that patients react to the QFT-G?
 - *What are some of the positive and negative comments patients have had about the QFT?*
 - *How do you think using the QFT-G affects patients' perceptions of their diagnosis?*
 - *What do you think is more on patients' mind – the invasiveness of the test, having less visits, or their perception of the result?*

Challenges

9. What are some of the challenges you have had in communicating with patients regarding the QFT?
 - *Regarding administration*
 - *Regarding the results*

Education

10. Are there any patient **questions or fears** that you have had to address regarding the QFT?
11. What do you consider the most **effective messages in educating patients** about the QFT?
12. What **resources or tools will help you communicate better** with patients about the QFT?
13. How would **you prefer to receive information regarding** the QFT yourself?
14. How will cost and health insurance reimbursement (having a separate ICD-9 code) for a test affect your decision to use one, both or either of the tests? If so, please explain?
 - *What element of testing is most relevant to your practice cost or infection control?*

Reimbursement

15. Will the top administrators of your hospital or medical group play a role on whether you use a certain test to evaluate for LTBI? If so, please explain?

Policy

16. Will preventive health measures set by your administrators affect your decision to use either test? If so, how?

Overall TST vs QFT

17. In terms of what we discussed today, what elements are most relevant to having you use one test over the other?
- *Are there special situations in which you might use both or neither of the tests? Please explain.*
 - *How will convenience of administration and obtaining results of a test influence your decision to use it?*

Advice to colleagues

18. What advice would you give to a colleague that is just starting to use the QFT-G?

Anything else?

19. What other aspects of TB testing come to mind that we have not discussed?

Closure (approx 10 minutes)

General summary of impressions or conclusions from the discussion by facilitator

Final opportunity for participants to clarify and confirm information

Q&A of participants' questions

We would like to thank you all for dedicating time to this and for sharing your experience and insights with us.