

Sepsis is increasing worldwide. One of the most important diagnostic tests to help manage patients with sepsis is the blood culture. Blood culture results, however, are not always positive in these patients, but this may be related to issues pertaining to the timing of obtaining cultures and other factors such as volume of blood cultured. Best practices in the use of this diagnostic test, can ensure the prompt and accurate detection of bacteremia and fungemia, and can help improve patient care. Numerous studies during the past 30 years have defined the optimal laboratory procedures for performing blood cultures and interpreting blood culture results. The presentation today will focus on reviewing the “best practice” methods for performing this diagnostic test and addressing some new advances in the use of blood culture technology. The Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI) recently published a new guideline, “Principles and Procedures for Blood Cultures”, and the recommendations from this guideline will be emphasized.