

DRUG TESTING TERMINOLOGY

Drug testing is a valuable clinical tool in the assessment and management of individuals in a number of healthcare settings. As drug testing technology advances and more and more practitioners incorporate drug testing into their clinical practice, there is often confusion around terminology related to this procedure. This document clarifies frequently encountered drug testing related terminology.



CLINICAL TERM

Confirmation/
Confirmatory

LABORATORY TERM

Definitive¹

Reflex testing
(automatically done on
a positive screening test)

DEFINITION

Usually mass
spectroscopy based
analysis for a specific
substance or metabolite

OTHER TERMS

- GC/MS²
- LC/MS-MS²
- Quantitative³



CLINICAL TERM

Screening

LABORATORY TERM

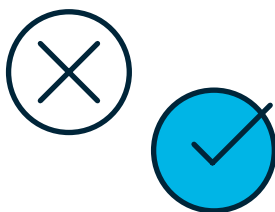
Screening

DEFINITION

An initial test, usually by
immunoassay, to detect
presence or absence of
a substance or class of
substances

OTHER TERMS

- Presumptive¹
- Immunoassay²
- Qualitative



CLINICAL TERM

Specimen validity testing

LABORATORY TERM

Specimen validity testing

DEFINITION

Testing for urine
creatinine, specific
gravity, and/or pH as
a test for specimen
alteration

OTHER TERMS

- Rigged/rigging⁴
- Falsified⁴
- Manipulated⁴
- Tampered with⁴
- Adulterated⁴
- Diluted
- Altered



CLINICAL TERM

Point of care test (POC)

In office test

LABORATORY TERM

Instant drug test

DEFINITION

Test analysis done at
the site of specimen
collection other than a
formal laboratory, usually
a healthcare office

OTHER TERMS

- Urine dip/dipstick
- Urine cup

¹These are the two terms preferred by ASAM to distinguish between the two classes of drug tests

²These are specimen analytical techniques. Immunoassays are most often considered presumptive but some immunoassays can produce very specific, definitive results

³A quantitative level should be interpreted cautiously as no method is 100% error-free i.e. depending on metabolism and time of the sample, heroin can be converted to morphine, missing the detection of an illegal drug.

⁴These are non-medical, stigmatizing, and potentially inaccurate terms and should be avoided