



Drug Use in the General U.S. Workforce Increased in First Half of 2001 According to Quest Diagnostics' Drug Testing Index

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TETERBORO, N.J., Nov 30, 2001 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- Drug use in the general U.S. workforce increased in the first half of 2001, according to the semi-annual Drug Testing Index released today by Quest Diagnostics Incorporated (NYSE: DGX), the leading provider of employer drug testing services in the United States.

In spite of the continuing trend toward lower drug use among federally- mandated, safety-sensitive workers, as well as continued low positivity rates for pre-employment drug testing, on-the-job drug use actually increased among the general U.S. workforce in the first half of 2001.

The positivity rate for the general U.S. workforce, which is the number of positive test results compared to the total number of drug tests performed by Quest Diagnostics for this category, increased to 5.0% from 4.9%. This increase was driven by three key segments of on-the-job testing: "post-accident," "random," and "returned to duty," which indicates a return to work following suspension due to a previous positive test result. The positivity rate for "post-accident" testing increased to 6.1% from 5.9% in 2000. The positivity rate for "random" drug testing increased to 7.9% from 7.7% in 2000, and the positivity rate for "returned to duty" drug testing increased to 5.5% from 5.3% in 2000. In contrast, positivity rates for these three categories declined for federally-mandated, safety-sensitive workers.

Federally-mandated, safety-sensitive workers include pilots, bus and truck drivers and workers in nuclear power plants, for whom routine drug testing is mandated by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, respectively.

"The data suggest that employers of non-federally-mandated, safety- sensitive workers should pay close attention to the signs and symptoms of drug abuse among employees," said R.H. Barry Sample, Ph.D., Director of Science and Technology for Quest Diagnostics' Corporate Health and Wellness division. "Currently, on-the-job drug testing is not a very common practice. In fact, only 20% of the drug testing that we perform among general U.S. workforce employees occurs after employees have begun work; the majority of drug testing that we do in this population is for pre-employment screening. Yet, once pre- employment candidates are employed, positivity rates appear to be on the rise."

The Drug Testing Index summarizes the results of more than 3 million workplace drug tests performed between January and June, 2001 by Quest Diagnostics. The Drug Testing Index looks at positivity rates among three major testing populations: federally-mandated, safety-sensitive workers; the general workforce; and the combined U.S. workforce.

On-the-job drug use negatively impacts workplace productivity due to increased absences, accidents and errors, according to the American Council for Drug Education, a substance abuse prevention and education agency, which operates as an affiliate of Phoenix House, a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention and treatment of substance abuse. Compared to their non- abusing co-workers, the agency states that substance abusers are:

- * 10 times more likely to miss work;
- * 3.6 times more likely to be involved in on-the-job accidents (and 5 times more likely to injure themselves or another in the process);
- * 5 times more likely to file a worker's compensation claim;
- * 33% less productive.

Color graphics of the Drug Testing Index, including regional maps which show positivity rates by type of drug, are available on-line at <http://www.questdiagnostics.com> to provide more localized workplace drug test data. The Drug Testing Index is released every six months as a service for government, media and industry, and is considered a benchmark for national trends.

Quest Diagnostics is the nation's leading provider of diagnostic testing, information and services with \$3.4 billion in annual revenues. The company's diagnostic testing yields information that enables health care professionals and consumers to make better decisions to improve health. Quest Diagnostics offers patients and physicians the broadest access to diagnostic testing services through its national network of approximately 30 full-service laboratories, 150 rapid response laboratories and more than 1,300 patient service centers, where specimens are collected. Quest Diagnostics is the leading provider of esoteric testing, including gene-based testing, and is the leader in routine medical testing, drugs of abuse testing, and non-hospital- based anatomic pathology testing. Quest Diagnostics empowers health care organizations and clinicians with state-of-the-art connectivity solutions that improve practice management. Through partnerships with pharmaceutical, biotechnology and information technology companies, Quest Diagnostics provides support to help speed the development of health care insights and new therapeutics. Additional company information can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.questdiagnostics.com>.

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Annual Positivity Rates
(For Combined U.S. Workforce)
(More than 3 million tests from January to June 2001)

Year	Drug Positive Rate
1988	13.6%
1989	12.7%
1990	11.0%
1991	8.8%

1992	8.8%
1993	8.4%
1994	7.5%
1995	6.7%
1996	5.8%
1997	5.0%
1998	4.8%
1999	4.6%
2000	4.7%
January - June 2001	4.7%

Positivity Rates By Testing Category

Testing Category	Jan- Jun 2001	2000	1999	1998	1997
Federally-Mandated, Safety-Sensitive Workforce	3.0%	3.1%	3.2%	3.4%	3.5%
General Workforce	5.0%	4.9%	4.8%	5.0%	5.2%
Combined U.S. Workforce	4.7%	4.7%	4.6%	4.8%	5.0%

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