



UNMC study shows billions can be saved by reducing blood draw contamination

MAY 17, 2017 BY [KARLA JAMES](#)

A study conducted at the University of Nebraska Medical Center shows that a new device could save billions of dollars in health care costs. Every year thousands of patients get their blood drawn for cultures in order to diagnose serious infections. A small but significant percentage of the blood cultures are contaminated due to skin fragments that contain bacteria are dislodged during a blood draw.

Dr. Mark Rupp is a professor and chief of UNMC Division of Infectious Diseases and medical director of the Department of Infection Control and Epidemiology at Nebraska Medicine as well as the lead author on this study. He says, "When a contamination occurs, about half other time the patient gets started on antibiotics that are unnecessary and that subjects the patient to all those toxicities and side effects of the antibiotics that they don't need – plus it costs money." Contaminated blood draws can also lead to unnecessary hospitalizations.

The study compared the standard blood draw procedures to ones using the SteriPath initial specimen diversion device (ISDD) to determine whether blood culture contamination was reduced. The ISDD is a sterile blood collection system that basically traps the portion of blood that contains skin cells and microbes and that is discarded.

Dr. Rupp says results show an approximately 88 percent improvement in false positives with the use of ISDD compared to standard procedures.

The results are published online in the journal, *Clinical Infectious Diseases*.