
#ArabHealth 2015: Future Proofing the Lab



In one of the sessions at Arab Health, quality expert Dr. Nashat Nafouri, Executive Officer, Saudi Quality Council spoke about how, in an era of digital natives and proactive consumers seeking quality at the right price, it is imperative to future proof the lab. According to Dr. Nafouri, lab directors are excellent at the science but need to step up to assume the leadership skills that will be required to be effective in the future.

Dr. Nafouri introduced the concept of triangle success for future laboratories: the *3Cs and I model*. The 3Cs are *competency, confidence* and *consistency*, while the I refers to the *intellectual* property built into all lab processes. With standards, laboratories will have consistency. Peer review gives confidence, and building human capital will take care of competency, said Dr. Nafouri. The intellectual aspect can be ensured by using an approach for management with ISO 15189.

Dr. Nafouri explained the importance of leadership in the laboratory, in particular how lab managers could benefit from using the Clinical and Laboratory Standard Institute (CLSI) standards to structure the lab quality system and improve processes. Labs should adopt the body of knowledge of the Clinical Laboratory Management Association (CLMA) as it can help shape future lab leaders. There needs to be an emphasis on the value of proficiency testing programme and unified checklists of the College of American Pathology (CAP). In addition, the international standard ISO 18159 is an approved international approach which can be used to advance quality in clinical laboratories.

Looking toward the millennial labs, the hot topics that should be considered include: who will the customers be, what technology platform will be available, what tests labs will offer, whether the workforce is ready and whether academic and professional development programmes are meeting the need and addressing quality and outcomes.

Laboratory accreditation became the trend of the last decade, noted Dr. Nafouri, with accreditation being gained either through the College of American Pathology (CAP), ISO 9001, ISO 15189 or with the Joint Commission International. There are over 600 medical laboratories accredited by CAP in Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Nafour cited the results of a satisfaction survey of quality professionals, which asked whether customers were more satisfied with accredited hospitals or non-accredited hospitals. Only 32 percent said they were satisfied with accredited hospitals. So the question is: what is the value added to the patient by accreditation?

Dr. Nafour points out that there are several lessons that could be learned from this:

1. Structuring healthcare algorithms on safety and quality culture is way beyond compliance. Labs cannot just come and be accredited and say we have the safety and quality culture. It takes decades to build culture.
2. Quality checklists are a good start with professional testing, but would be more effective if standards are driven to promote best practice culture.
3. Emphasis should be on building human capital for the future with a focus on change and using management set of skills through career planning and development.
4. Transforming volume-based lab practice into value-based to improve healthcare outcomes.

Incorporating these elements could improve leadership skills as well as the quality of service that is provided to customers.

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