



Pictured Left to Right: Jens Ringel, Michael Haase, Saban Elitok, Elisabeth Engelmann, Annemarie Albert from an integrated clinical care team in Potsdam, Germany



Pictured Left to Right: Shirley Cleary, Jenny Nobes, Emma Robinson, John Dillon, Ellie Dow, Ian Kennedy, Elizabeth Furrie from an integrated clinical care team in Dundee, United Kingdom

**“Tell me and I forget.
 Teach me and
 I remember.
 Involve me
 and I learn.”**

– Benjamin Franklin

Engaging Communities of Stakeholders for Measurably Better Patient Care

Critical to optimal health for patients is access to high-quality healthcare services that are effectively coordinated across health systems. Healthcare system communities are comprised of diverse stakeholders including but not limited to the clinical laboratory, clinicians, health system administration, and payors. Each stakeholder has unique responsibilities, but all share a common goal of high-quality services and timely delivery of healthcare services. Traditionally, stakeholders tend to work in silos. Segregated, the brilliant minds, innovators and doers have limited potential, resulting in the delivery of inefficient and fragmented healthcare.

Recently, stakeholder engagement has evolved with an “all-hands-on-deck” approach, thus gaining credibility and traction to deliver the highest quality patient care. By breaking down the walls between healthcare teams, novel ideas emerge and can be implemented with success. By working together, collaborative teams push harder, think bigger and develop solid plans of action with wide-reaching impact.

The clinical laboratory is known for the massive quantity of objective clinical data it generates and is a central player for patient care. The objective laboratory data (i.e., test results), are used in conjunction with

clinical data to aid in the formulation of clinical diagnosis, management or treatment of patients. Beyond accuracy, the true value of a diagnostic test lies in whether it enhances patient care in measurable ways (i.e., improved and quicker diagnostic decisions, increased overall effectiveness of treatment, increased patient wellness). Quantifying the expanded value of laboratory insights has been a key challenge however for the clinical laboratory.

A large factor contributing to that gap is the absence of integration. Many stakeholders are passive recipients of laboratory data with different backgrounds and perspectives. In a collaborative system, the clinical laboratory is actively and often, proactively engaged across stakeholder functions including physicians, nurses and other clinical staff, with influence on the overall performance for delivering the best patient outcomes. Maximizing collaborations ensures a voice for all partners, leading to new ideas and better healthcare.

Many examples of stakeholder communities now exist, driving measurable benefits for patients, payors, clinicians and health systems. These include but are not limited to best practices recently recognized by the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence Awards

(www.UnivantsHCE.com). In all 12 examples, integrated clinical care teams unified across traditional silos to integrate laboratory data and insights into avant-garde processes to improve outcomes.

Many of the examples included Laboratory IT (Information Technology) as a valued new trend to synthesize complex data into more actionable pathways. Whether it was complex algorithms for the implementation of an intelligent liver function (iLFT) algorithm or simple ones for earlier detection of acute kidney injury, IT, in partnership with lab medicine and clinical pathways can trigger new care delivery models and healthcare transformation.

As shared by one of the 2019 UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence winners, Dr. John Dillon, (Professor of Hepatology and Gastroenterology from Dundee, United Kingdom): “The benefit of predictive algorithms with real-time management plans enables rapid treatment for patients that may have been lost to care gaps without follow-up. It brings me great pleasure to know that we are giving our patients the best possible care.”

Engaging and involving the stakeholders during all stages of a care initiative leads to buy-in, successful implementation of the care initiative, and long-term support. Once a care initiative is implemented, early and regularly on-going communication regarding the outcomes often help manage expectations and build further support. Stakeholder support may also be gained by sharing successful programs and outcomes other healthcare teams have experienced. Thus, education about successful care projects helps to inspire more success and new stakeholder communities for measurably better care.

Not unlike what is evoked in a famous quote from Benjamin Franklin, involvement does matter. “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”