Clinical laboratories are vital to healthcare, generating actionable data and valued insights for predictive risk management, preventative health, and integrated care. Clinical laboratorians, however, have not been traditionally recognized for their full potential. Thus, there is need to reinforce the power of laboratory medicine more broadly, including elevation of successful best practices whereby the leadership and/or involvement of laboratory medicine enables measurable benefits for patients, payors, clinicians, and entire health systems. It is incumbent upon each of us as champions of the clinical laboratory to get the word out on the value of laboratory testing. We need to lead with action, drive change, and inspire trusted collaborations across health disciplines through strategic application of laboratory data to achieve measurably better healthcare across the globe.

One successful initiative in promoting, inspiring, and recognizing representative best practices is the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence Award Program. Eight leading healthcare organizations have partnered together to offer prestigious and global recognition for integrated clinical care teams who have achieved exceptional outcomes in healthcare. The partner organizations interface with and represent varied disciplines across the healthcare continuum, reinforcing the importance of unity and/or partnerships both within and outside the clinical laboratory. Founding partners of the program include the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (IFCC), AACC, EHMA (European Health Management Association), Modern Healthcare, Health Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), National Association of Healthcare Quality (NAHQ), and the Institute of Health Economics (IHE); each through partnerships with Abbott Laboratories.

Twelve diverse best practices were recognized by the program in 2019, shining a spotlight on the value of laboratory medicine and its corresponding impact on key performance indicators (KPIs) for patients, payers, clinicians, and health systems. Foundational principals across winning teams are denoted within the award name, as each team “UNIFIED” across traditional healthcare silos to implement “AVANTE-GARDE” processes. The latter
ranged from strategic new care delivery models, activation of partnerships with care providers, and/or implementation of new care pathways to drive improved outcomes.

More details about the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence program or the care teams featured in Figure 1 that were recognized for their best practices can be found on the program website at www.UnivantsHCE.com. Their success stories, in addition to the valued articles being featured in this special collection, are brilliant proof of the value position for laboratory medicine.

Reduced clinical uncertainty. Improved patient wellness. Enhanced reputation. Increased clinical confidence. Decreased costs. Increased patient safety. These are just a few of the most frequently observed benefits shared by the integrated teams who submitted best practices in the program’s inaugural year. Their success begs the question:
How can more health systems achieve comparable success? What more can be done to inspire that success?

Imagine, for example, if the traditional healthcare siloes and/or activity-based services shifted to patient-focused services empowered by the integration of health and social care. Consider the myriad of expanded possibilities if the value proposition of laboratory medicine was no longer debated or misunderstood, but rather fully comprehended across stakeholders for its value in accurate test reporting and expansive potential in diagnostic optimization, therapeutic intervention, and population health management. To make this happen, we must all do our part.

Not unlike the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence program, which encourages a mindset shift through the education of remarkable best practices, we can all promote the power and value of laboratory medicine. As more healthcare teams “UNIFY for SOMETHING GREATER,” more best practices will undoubtedly emerge. Sharing those success stories will lead to more success stories and new ideas that can further galvanize new teams and drive even more success. By reinforcing what is possible, we can achieve more, including elevation of patient care and redefining the new “possible.”

The time is now to get involved and get the word out. Let’s celebrate the success of others, inspire advocacy for the clinical laboratory and for worldwide global healthcare. The takeaway is clear and the message needs to be heard… Laboratory Medicine saves lives.