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Quality indicators in the microbiology laboratory: Establishing, monitoring and evaluation

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Quality Indicators (QIs) monitor and evaluate performance throughout critical aspects of all laboratory processes. However, for many public and private laboratories in resource challenged nations, it is observed that QIs are either not in place or minimally in place. With the implementation of Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance (AMR) programs driven by WHO and CDC, AMR related measures are required. QIs data is expected to be collected, continuously monitored and evaluated. Practical and meaningful measures are needed that include both quality parameters and laboratory operational efficiency. Since most measures are not yet fully harmonized, once defined there is the opportunity to implement best practices throughout a particular country thereby providing useful comparative data. QIs are required for the ISO 15189- International standard for medical laboratories accreditation, the Quality Management System (QMS) and in keeping with microbiology Good Laboratory Practice (GLP). Measures indicate how well a laboratory is performing and provide definitive data for decision-making including data that can be used for justification of additional staff or in support of funding for new equipment. It is appropriate for a national reference laboratory to take the lead in establishing standardized metrics. It is suggested to implement a comprehensive program including not only demographic indicators but also process performance indicators and resource management indicators. The establishment, monitoring and evaluation of quality indicators are critical to the operations of a microbiology laboratory and with the current focus on AMR surveillance, essential in improving the role of the laboratory in preventive care.

Biography

Martin R Evans is a Clinical Laboratory Director with a PhD in Medical Microbiology and Immunology. He currently serves as a Laboratory Consultant to the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) USA and the American Society for Microbiology (ASM). He was an Associate Director at the NYC Public Health Laboratory and a Clinical Laboratory Director at Quest Diagnostics and SmithKline Beecham Clinical Laboratories. He also held academic positions at Temple University and the University of Zimbabwe, Faculty of Medicine.

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