
MedLab: POCT Challenges and opportunities



Quality control, the benefits and limitations of technology and the need for incisive leadership were some of the topics featured in the Point of Care Testing (POCT) session at one of the inaugural sessions at MedLab.

Lab professionals from around Europe examined the challenges and opportunities facing POCT through the lenses of acute disease, Emergency Department (ED), urine testing and connectivity.

Dr Nayra Rico from Core Lab at the Hospital Clinic Barcelona, emphasised the need to establish fundamental department requirements when introducing POCT.

“You need to identify needs, costs and benefits and support personnel with training and technical back up with a POCT coordinator who is a specialist in clinical lab,” she told a full room of lab professionals.

Reducing ED overcrowding with mobile laboratories diagnostics was the focus from Dr Robbert Slingerland of Isala Klinieken based in the Netherlands. With a value-based healthcare orientation, Slingerland explained how paramedics conduct a bank of POCT tests for potential CVD patients at the latter’s location before deciding whether to follow up with hospital transfer. The reaction to the pilot amongst delegates was mixed owing to possible risks for patient safety but Slingerland argued that the practice, which is going to be rolled out in more clinics in the Netherlands, was no less effective than current protocol and has shown annual ED savings of 40 million euros to date.

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Dr Patrick Twomey from St Vincent’s University in Dublin put lab leadership under the microscope. “Critically-minded clinical leaders are needed,” he said. “Culture is very important; lab must decide what important and what isn’t.”

The latter part of the session turned to technology with Dr Joris R Delanghe from Ghent University in Belgium commenting on the cost savings connected to mHealth testing while Alvaro Garcia Osuna focused on the need for upgraded HIT connectivity in order to improve efficiency and cut costs. Dr Tony Avades from Plymouth Hospital NHS Trust in the UK spoke about biomarker POCT in the community.

“With mHealth, patients can manage health at home and some devices work very well,” he said. “Innovations will increase the quality and affordability of testing but should not be at expense of human intervention so to avoid scams.”

MedLab is taking place in Barcelona from October 2 -4. In addition to POCT, featured tracks are immunology, laboratory management, anatomic pathology, clinical microbiology and haematology.

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