

Quality Qorner

Dhyan From the Deccan

DOI: 10.1309/OJROAD2RCFAX1JU4

Under her lab coat, the female pathologist wore an embroidered silk sari. The young male performing testing on a small desktop analyzer wore casual slacks and shirt but no lab coat or gloves. The makeshift hematology slide-staining rack was crafted from four 10-mL disposable glass pipettes in double parallel rows duct taped to a shallow metal tray. A square of glass atop a wooden bench covered several package inserts that served as the laboratory's testing procedures. I was visiting my first laboratory on my first trip to India.

The Indian government Ministry of Health had appointed the Quality Council of India (QCI) to write standards for medical laboratories. The volunteer work group based the Indian standards on the requirements in the international medical laboratory standard ISO 15189. After a full year's preparation, the QCI was ready to launch the process to make the country's laboratories aware of the requirement that all government and private laboratories register with the QCI Medical Laboratory Programme and implement the standard. The central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh volunteered to host the awareness launch seminars and be the first state to register its laboratories. I had been asked to speak about quality management systems as a means for all Indian government and private laboratories, regardless of size, scope, specialty, or location, to meet the QCI Medical Laboratory Programme requirements. I was honored to speak with fellow laboratory professionals and physicians and visit some representative Indian laboratories.

The program opened with a lovely ceremony dedicated to education and learning. Each of the program's 5 primary speakers lit a wick immersed in the oil of a tall brass candle, the base of which was covered with pink and red rose petals. As we passed from speaker to speaker the taper used to light the candle wicks, our moderator explained the ceremony to the participants. "By bringing flame to this candle, we emerge from darkness into light. Our speakers today will enlighten us about the QCI Medical Laboratory Programme. We share with you the light of this knowledge that you may share with others and we may all attain the wisdom of better quality care for our patients." I was moved by this simple yet profound tradition. Our country's fast-paced culture often overlooks the deeper truths of ancient wisdom to jump right into the process.

"Dyhan" is a Hindi word that means "wisdom." The "Deccan" is a triangular plateau that occupies most of the Indian peninsula. The physician speaker preceding me shared his perspective on bringing wisdom (dyhan) to light in India (the Deccan). He used the acronym CARE as a means for Indian laboratories to contribute to patient safety. Our culture loves acronyms, so I thought I'd share this one. Perhaps the words will resonate with you as they did with me.

C: Concern, Consideration, Capability, and Competence.

Medical laboratory professionals should be *concerned* about the quality of testing their laboratories provide for patient care.

We should always *consider* the needs of our laboratory's internal and external customers and strive to meet them. Our laboratories should be *capable* of efficiently and effectively handling the services provided. Each of us needs to be *competent* in our respective job processes and procedures to truly contribute to patient safety.

A: Attentiveness, Action, Accountability

As medical laboratory professionals, we should be *attentive* to the details necessary for providing quality laboratory testing. We need to *act* in a professional manner at all times—to fellow laboratorians, physicians, nurses, patients, and visitors. We need to be *accountable* for owning our actions, whether the results are good or bad, without fault, blame, or guilt.

R: Respect, Reliability, Responsibility

The laboratory is a stressful environment; therefore, life is better when we *respect* our fellow workers. We owe it to our fellow workers to be *reliable*, fulfilling assigned work schedules and completing assigned tasks. We need to take *responsibility* for our actions, always remembering that there is a real patient behind each sample.

E: Empathy, Excellence

Empathy is the ability to share in another's emotions, thoughts, or feelings; we need to empathize with the nurses who need our services to provide appropriate direct hands-on care to their patients. We need to choose to be personally and professionally *excellent*—a laboratory's excellence can only stem from the commitment to excellence by each staff member.

India is regarded as the land of Hindu mysticism. However, there's nothing mysterious about this speaker's entreaty to his fellow Indian laboratory professionals—a universal message for the betterment of patient care and safety. I'll add one last important "E" here. Laboratory directors, managers, and supervisors need to *empower* their staffs to CARE.

This Month's Quality Quote:

"To recognize what things you know and what things you do not know—this is wisdom."

—Confucius

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