

UNIFY FOR SOMETHING GREATER. HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE AWAITS.



There is increased recognition in health systems around the world that collaboration with the core laboratory is critical to developing, implementing and evaluating care innovation projects. Modern Healthcare Custom Media spoke with **Prof. Tahir Pillay, professor of chemical pathology and head of pathology at the University of Pretoria/National Health Laboratory Service and Steve Biko Academic Hospital**, to discuss the significance of this paradigm shift to the delivery of high-quality healthcare.

As President of the South African Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine, what is your vision for all laboratory professionals and the profession of laboratory medicine?

PROF. TAHIR PILLAY: We must encourage healthcare professionals—especially those who work in the laboratory—to be more active participants in healthcare policy. I'd also like to see improvements in regional and local healthcare strategy, and that'll come as laboratory professionals become more involved in decision-making bodies, local hospital governance and other leadership roles. Laboratory professionals should play a key role in how healthcare policy, strategy and innovation is decided on.

How can administrators create an environment that encourages collaboration with laboratory professionals and pathologists?

TP: I think the most important thing an administrator can do is include professionals from the laboratory on relevant committees and policy bodies within their organization. By being a part of these important conversations, laboratory professionals are able to see how they can help their hospital run efficiently and on prudent financial principles. Considering the significant role that the laboratory plays in hospital budgets, administrators similarly can benefit from close collaboration with laboratory professionals.

There is no shortage of innovation within healthcare, but not all innovations produce measurably better outcomes. Can you speak to both the challenges and importance of measuring outcomes of care innovation?

TP: It can be challenging to define a key performance indicator, or KPI. You have to collaborate as a team to choose the right KPI for your outcome, measure it, reassess it and see how well it works.



Prof. Tahir Pillay
Professor of Chemical Pathology and Head of Pathology, University of Pretoria/National Health Laboratory Service, Steve Biko Academic Hospital

Laboratory professionals are key players in that process, which is undoubtedly critical—the importance of a strong KPI cannot be overstated for anything you do in healthcare.

An increasing number of applicants for the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence program are from emerging markets, with two sites this year from Africa receiving global recognition for achievement and distinction. What further opportunities should be expected for care innovation in South Africa and the continent at large?

TP: Point-of-care testing will drive innovation, especially here in South Africa. I expect increased adoption of point-of-care testing to enable better care for underserved areas and improve our ability to manage care quality as these systems provide more data. You can't build a laboratory everywhere, so you need basic clinics with point-of-care testing. In Africa, we need this because of the sparsity of laboratory services and small towns. You have to have the systems that will handle routine healthcare, and routine healthcare can be handled using mobile clinics and laboratories, among other innovations.

In your opinion, why should healthcare innovators unite their teams to apply for the UNIVANTS award?

TP: There are a lot of teams that are doing important work without recognition. Some of these teams may not be focused on recognition, or even realize the global importance of what they're doing. Recognition, however, can galvanize a team and make them think about what their work means to the rest of the world. Recognition can also be significant in encouraging further innovation and professional development. It can elevate profiles and potentially encourage more investment in their important work.

Applications for the 2021 awards open August 1st. Prepare now at UnivantsHCE.com.



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