



## Measurably better healthcare performance in Palestine through leadership and comprehensive quality management



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The importance of quality assurance in clinical laboratories cannot be overstated. This is because high quality within laboratory medicine is essential for high-quality patient outcomes, resource optimization, and ultimately, appropriate care.

Despite this tight correlation, not all countries require quality systems and/or medical laboratory accreditation. This is particularly true in developing countries where there is limited participation in external quality control programs, including ISO 15189 accreditation.

The developing world can have extreme cost pressures, and often in the pursuit of cost containment, quality can suffer. Recognizing the importance of quality, Dr. Osama Najjar, General Manager of Allied Health Professions, formed an integrated clinical care team with a mission to transform healthcare across their governmental clinical laboratories within Palestine, which included a central public health laboratory, 14 hospital laboratories and 193 primary healthcare laboratories.

Their patient-centric and quality-focused team included Laboratory Medicine, IT, Quality, Procurement, and Human Resources enabling the development and implementation of a robust quality system with extraordinary outcomes.

Over the course of their strategic three-year plan, the team secured funding to implement multiple high impact changes including new organizational structures which not only enabled the hiring of 160 additional resources but ensured adequate training for existing and new teams.

They also improved laboratory infrastructure through rehabilitation of the buildings, and thoughtful expansion of the laboratory space. The team acquired 416 new diagnostic instruments for all areas of the laboratory which included CBC analyzers, automated chemistry and immunoassay instruments, blood culture systems, hemoglobin A1C testing, blood gas analysis instrumentation, blood banking, coagulation and electrophoresis.

Their approach included the pursuit of ISO 15189 accreditation for laboratories, providing a standardized accreditation framework for continuous improvement and quality assurance.

Key performance indicators indicate reduced maternal mortality

rates by 9.8 deaths per 100,000 live births and decreased the infant mortality rate by 0.2 deaths per 1,000 births.

Laboratory testing volumes increased from under 4 million tests per year to nearly 10 million, improving laboratory revenue by 65.6% and new onsite testing that had never been done before. Collectively, these changes enabled faster access to clinical results for improved decision making as well as more timely and accurate care.

Despite these and other great outcomes, the quest to continuously improve healthcare outcome through high quality continues.

This team is currently focused on achieving ISO15189 accreditation for 11 additional laboratories, with plans to expand in-house test menus even further while increasing staffing and maintaining high satisfaction ratings.

Dr. Najjar states that his team hopes to also expand their initiative to other countries.

Based on the measurable success of this program, the 2019 UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence Award Program recognized this care team with achievement.

The international honor was assessed by leading global healthcare organizations including: International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (IFCC), AACC, European Health Management Association (EHMA), Modern Healthcare, Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), National Association for Healthcare Quality (NAHQ,) and Integrating the Healthcare Enterprise (IHE) with sponsorship via Abbott Laboratories.

### THREE KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. A quality driven culture can drive quality outcomes.
2. Sustainability of high-quality outcomes require internal and external quality management systems, as recommended for clinical laboratories in ISO 15189.
3. The patient-centric, quality-focused leadership at Palestine Laboratory and Allied Health Services enabled transformational healthcare, resulting in decreased mortality, increased patient confidence, enhanced staff satisfaction, and increased revenue.