

UNIVANTS: Five Years of Healthcare Excellence

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Now celebrating its fifth year, the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence program continues to inspire and celebrate best practices in healthcare from across the globe that involve clinical laboratories, along with other interdisciplinary teams.

Since its inception, the program has recognized more than 60 innovative clinical care initiatives throughout the world. Winners for 2022, announced on June 26, 2023, include (1) a program implemented by the National Basketball Association (NBA) to protect health and well-being during the 2020 NBA playoffs, (2) a self-screening HPV initiative to help eliminate cervical cancer in Malaysia and (3) a program to improve outcomes through enhanced perioperative pathways for people with diabetes in the United Kingdom.

The UNIVANTS program is significant because it recognizes integrated clinical care teams that are making a difference, with best practices across disease states and within different sectors, but whose initiatives are not always published, explains Tricia Ravalico, global director of scientific leadership and education, core diagnostics at Abbott, founder of UNIVANTS. The awards program is also championed by AACC, the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine, the European Health Management Association, Modern Healthcare, HIMSS, the National Association for Healthcare Quality, and the Institute of Health Economics.

"We built the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence program on the principal need to amplify best practices. It has been our hope that by putting a spotlight on these initiatives, we educate teams on proven examples of measurably better healthcare, while inspiring more teams to achieve similar success," Ravalico says.

Ravalico is proud that the UNIVANTS program has stayed true to its core mission—the award recognizes teams who have achieved great success through teamwork and the power of lab medicine, she says. Applicants come from all over the world and are product agnostic.

The program continues to evolve, with more best practices across newer disease states and different types of health systems applying, including health-centered organizations outside of traditional care.

"A final area of growth is the program's recent focus on education," explains Ravalico. "We are currently piloting an educational forum this year, in partnership with the UNIVANTS program, to help better educate across silos to further amplify messaging and best practices for those interested in healthcare excellence. That forum is called the Executive Leadership Exchange, with more details at healthcareelx.com."

Ravalico notes that laboratory medicine is an underutilized strategic asset for health and well-being of communities and populations. She stresses that any initiative that elevates and amplifies the importance of this discipline has value because it highlights new possibilities leadership.

"We have over 800 key performance metrics now across 64 best practices, and more to come each year," she says. "As such, it is now one of the largest evidence repositories that supports the value of lab medicine. We need to harness those insights and continue education in ways that help us all grow together for the patients we serve."

As for the future of the UNIVANTS award program, Ravalico notes that the late Professor Howard Morris, past president of the IFCC, once shared that the road to success for UNIVANTS would be that one day, the award itself would not be necessary.

"The latter presumes that the profession of laboratory medicine is widely recognized for its value, actively engaged in strategic initiatives with its rightful seat at the table, while ideally also being paid for that value," she says. "As an industry and a profession, we are not there yet. Until then, it is our mission to continue in this effort."

In partnership with the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence program, AACC will host its first 5k run/walk to honor the power of laboratory medicine at the 2023 AACC Annual Scientific Meeting & Clinical Lab Expo. The UNI5K will take place on Monday, July 24, outside of the Anaheim Convention Center. To register, visit meeting.aacc.org/conference-program/univants-5k.

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