



# CHECKING IN

with DAN PERES

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## Innovation and evolving role of lab medicine are driving measurably better healthcare

In this installment of Modern Healthcare Custom Media's video series Checking In With Dan Peres, he talks with Dr. Alexander Carterson, divisional vice president, medical, clinical and scientific affairs and HEOR (Health Economics and Outcomes Research) at Abbott, a multinational medical device and healthcare company headquartered in Abbott Park, Ill.

Their conversation hinges on the importance of innovation in healthcare, the evolving role of laboratory medicine, and the need for collaboration and breaking down silos in the industry. Dr. Carterson shares how the UNIVANTS program celebrates and promotes innovative best practices in healthcare and aims to inspire teams and health systems to improve patient care through collaboration and innovation. This is an excerpt of their conversation.

**DP: You've been involved in a lot of innovation through your work. Can you give an overview of how and perhaps even why innovation is so important within healthcare?**

**AC:** The Innovation is about the importance of measurably better healthcare. Innovation addresses the core gaps and maximizes health delivery and health overall because it keeps healthcare evolving in terms of technology, new diagnostics, and new therapeutics. During the pandemic, we even saw a new way of people interacting with healthcare and its delivery. At the forefront of that is innovation, and that's something we celebrate here as we're trying to make patient lives better.

**DP: Are there any examples you can give of how healthcare innovation has impressed you or of best practices that have recently emerged?**

**AC:** In the past couple years, some best practices that impressed me are through a program Abbott supports called the UNIVANTS program where we celebrate innovation. One of this year's UNIVANTS winners was the NBA. What they did in Orlando with the NBA bubble was an amazing example of innovation. They brought the lab and their clinicians together to make sure what was happening during quarantine didn't impact the whole organization, and they found a way to push through it. Another great innovation in the delivery of healthcare would be what Program ROSE is doing in Malaysia. [Their goal] is the elimination of cervical cancer through HPV screening, and they're going to the women in their villages for sample collection and therefore eliminating some of the barriers and obstacles that a lot of women have in taking care of themselves, as the center of the family, taking care of the kids, doing everything they do. And finally, I think the IP3D Project from the U.K. where they looked at perioperative screening of patients with diabetes prior to surgery is yet another means of helping patients heal faster. Those were three great recent examples where we celebrate innovation, address patient needs and help fill those healthcare gaps.

**DP: Each of those cases that you referenced involves laboratory medicine. How has laboratory medicine evolved over time and what type of presence does it have in healthcare settings?**

**AC:** As a pathologist myself, there's the stereotype of pathology in the basement, there when you need them, but I think pathology is

really coming into its own as a value to overall healthcare. People are realizing the interdisciplinary nature of medicine, the complexity of molecular testing, of serology testing, of overall tissue diagnosis along with other modalities of diagnostics. It really can't be done in a vacuum. You must have an integrative care team. And pathology is at the forefront of that. I don't think people realize how much of their medical diagnostic prowess is coming from the laboratory.

**DP: As the healthcare industry looks to evolve and innovate, the path forward is to tear down these silos and have all aspects of the industry working closely together for the overall good of patients. Do you agree?**

**AC:** I think you're spot on, Dan. It takes a village and in medicine it's no different. What the lab does is help teams collaborate on possible diagnostic pathways, what comes next, what does it all mean? For that to happen, we need to give lab medicine a seat at the table. Laboratories can give providers the power of data and insights to drive transformational care. It's not, I would argue, a cost center. Lab medicine could actually be used to help control costs and make insightful, data-driven decisions. That's part of why I love the UNIVANTS program, because it is showing the power of what happens when you involve the lab more in clinical decision-making and how we get to measurably better outcomes.

**DP: For me, reviewing the UNIVANTS cases and helping celebrate and elevate these multidisciplinary clinical care teams has taught me a lot about where the innovation is happening in this unbelievably complex industry. So, how did the UNIVANTS program come about? What are its origins?**

**AC:** We started seeing great stuff happening with some of our collaborators in health systems, and we wanted to celebrate and get the word out about these best practices. We decided to form a coalition of stakeholders that celebrated innovative best care practices that ultimately impact patients. We wanted collaboration. We wanted people to unite for measurably better health outcomes. We wanted it to be avant-garde. But we really wanted it to be a call to action to inspire teams and health systems around the world to push ideas forward. We have 60-plus best practices that have come out of the program. When we sit down with that winner and their team, we always involve the C-suite so they understand their team is doing amazing, innovative things and make them aware of what people can do when they break down those silos, when they come together with the common goal of making patient lives better. It brings perspectives together, and it's led to transformation in a lot of areas.

For more details on the UNIVANTS award program, visit [www.UnivantsHCE.com](http://www.UnivantsHCE.com).

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