



Workforce Development in the ‘New Normal’: Are We Doing it Right? ASLM2021 Roundtable 4

Co-conveners

- **Anafi Mataka**, African Society for Laboratory Medicine
- **Tim Trevan**, Chrome Biorisk Management LLC

Panelists

- **Susan Kiwanuka**, Makerere University School of public Health Uganda will highlight the experience of Uganda in defining laboratory staffing norms
- **Clarence Chaffee**, The Caviart Group, USA, will unpack the various ways of valorizing training and education for individual career benefits.
- **Juliet Bryant**, The Global Fund will discuss the value of the Global laboratory Leadership programme
- **Aaron Shibemba**, Ministry of Health Zambia will reflect on how the national public health Institute of Zambia develops and maintains the staff competencies.
- **Prof Wendy Stevens**, Wits University, South Africa will provide the academic perspective on the added value of accrediting training and courses

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly demonstrated how, even in developed economies, laboratory diagnostic capacity was not prepared to respond to a pandemic. In LMIC, one of the enduring bottlenecks preventing optimal routine and emergency laboratory testing is the shortage of a skilled workforce. Many African countries struggle to build a sufficient pool of people trained to perform safe and quality disease surveillance and diagnostic tests.

In the cycle of panic and neglect around laboratory system strengthening, a lot of resources have been dedicated to ad-hoc emergency and online training to build up the human capacity required to increase the COVID-19 testing. How are these efforts paying off in terms of the immediate response to the outbreak, and what is their contribution to the WHO international health regulations requirements¹ and professional recognition and career development?

¹ The WHO’s International Health Regulations place upon States an obligation to have or to develop national core public health capacities for surveillance of and response to listed diseases and to notify WHO of all events that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern. Disease surveillance networks and laboratory

Besides the timely one-off training delivered in emergencies, robust training programmes for laboratory leaders or experts in disease surveillance are also being implemented. Can these initiatives fulfil their promises in a context where competency requirements and staffing norms for various laboratory functions and quality standards for educational materials are often missing?

Objectives

This session seeks to:

- Assess the do's and don'ts for laboratory workforce development in general and training in particular, as highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis
- Survey proven effective adult education and professional training methodologies used in other sectors
- Address how diagnostic laboratory professional training can incorporate concepts and practices from other sectors to improve the effectiveness of routine and emergency diagnostic laboratory personnel training
- Raise awareness and promote the need to introduce formal professional certification, qualification, and registration to build a sustainable workforce

Session programme

- Welcome, introduction and opening remarks
- Moderated question and answer panel discussion
- Key conclusions and lessons learnt

diagnostic capacity are obviously key to being able to meet these obligations. Training of the workforce has been the main mechanism used to meet this gap.