

# “The Role of the Laboratory Medical Director: Responsibilities, Expectations and Challenges”

Ronald L. Weiss, MD, MBA, FASCP

University of Utah/ARUP Laboratories

2011 ASCP Annual Meeting/WASPaLM XXVI World Congress

Las Vegas, NV

October 2011

# Disclosures

- No financial conflicts of interest to disclose

# Some things change...

- But, other things never change
  - As health care delivery system models evolve, new challenges and opportunities appear
  - Yet, a laboratory medical director still has a core set of roles and responsibilities...

# Overarching Roles & Responsibilities

- To provide effective leadership in:
  - Medical care and service to the patient
  - Education of colleagues and staff
  - Administration of your service unit

# Leadership

- Effective leaders...
  - Act with integrity and courage
  - Engender trust
  - Treat others with compassion
  - Act responsibly
  - Create effective teams
  - Communicate effectively
  - Hold themselves and others accountable
  - Change and help others to change
  - Improve continuously

# Leaders as Communicators

- Leaders are expected to:
  - Reward others
  - Recognize value
  - Support, guide and direct others
  - Mentor, coach and develop others
  - Correct and discipline
  - Resolve conflict
  - Explain their vision

# Common Mistakes of Leadership

1. Having an uncaring attitude
2. Avoid difficult situations & decisions
3. Lack personal character
4. Lack vision
5. Show favoritism
6. Fail to hold others accountable
7. Poor communication & interpersonal skills

# Medical Leadership

- Medical leaders...
  - Influence other health care professionals
  - Direct people and programs
  - Use resources in a clinically effective and cost effective fashion
  - Comply with all regulatory requirements
  - Maintain a patient-centric focus
  - Promote patient safety and optimal clinical outcomes
  - Promote medical professionalism

# Educational Leadership

- Assure a competent, well-trained workforce
- Integrate medicine, science and technology
- Provide opportunities for improving personal knowledge and advancement

# Administrative Leadership

- Participate in all managerial decisions
- Guide the day-to-day operation of your service unit
- Assure clinically appropriate quality service standards
- Participate in institutional planning
- Provide for a productive, supportive working environment
- Delegate appropriately and effectively
- Embrace change for the better
- Be fiscally responsible
- Assure effective communication with all outside constituencies and stakeholders

# Objectives

1. Understand the role of medical leadership in the laboratory
2. Understand the unique compliance and regulatory requirements of the Laboratory Medical Director
3. Discuss examples of leadership which emphasize the role of the Laboratory Medical Director

# So, you think you want to be a laboratory medical director...

- What are the duties and responsibilities of this role?
  - Regulatory compliance standards
- The essential elements:
  - Leadership and team building
  - Communication
  - Risk management & compliance
  - Medical services & operation management
  - Quality management

# Duties & Responsibilities: Standards & Expectations

- Laboratory Director Responsibilities under CLIA 1988
- The College of American Pathologists Laboratory Director Standard
- Typical duties of a pathologist in the LMD role

# CLIA 1988: “The buck stops with you”

“As the laboratory director, **you are responsible** for the **overall operation** and administration of the laboratory, including the employment of competent qualified personnel. Even though **you have the option to delegate** some of your responsibilities, you remain **ultimately responsible** and must ensure that all duties are properly performed and applicable **CLIA regulations are met.**”

Source: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

# Responsibilities you cannot delegate...

1. Assure quality services
2. Adequate physical facilities
3. Safe environment
4. The presence of a general supervisor
5. Sufficient, competent staff
6. Review of all new procedures
7. Written staff duties & responsibilities

# CAP Standard for the LMD

“A Board-certified pathologist, other physician or a doctoral scientist...Qualified to assume the professional, scientific, consultative, organizational, administrative responsibilities for the services provided. The Director shall have sufficient authority to implement and maintain the Standards.”

# Typical Duties & Responsibilities of a Pathologist

- Assure accurate test results
- Interact with the medical staff (consultation)
- Establish clinical test performance parameters
- Advise laboratory staff on patient care issues
- Select, evaluate and validate new tests
- Direct QC and QA programs
- Evaluate clinical data and review abnormal results
- Assure compliance with accreditation
- Plan effectively
- Educate others

# Your liabilities...

- You are responsible for your own mistakes
- But, you can be held responsible for the mistakes of others
  - Fellow pathologists
    - Overlooking risky behavior or incompetence
  - Technologists in the laboratory
    - Failures under their scope of duties
    - “Vicarious liability” as Laboratory Medical Director
- Not meeting your regulatory compliance duties and responsibilities, including persistent quality failures

So, you *still* want to be an LMD...

What would you do in the following situations?

1. Assuring patient safety and managing risk
2. Managing limited resources and medical necessity
3. Meeting the challenges of the health system
4. Resolving conflict

# What would you do?

It has been a particularly busy morning in your hospital laboratory, where you are the medical director. A drift in an analyzer results was not reported and acted upon, resulting in a number of erroneously high potassium results reported. It is now 4:00 pm and the supervisor brings this to your attention. What do you decide to do?

# Erroneously High K+ Results?

1. Confirm that the problem has been corrected and that the technologist involved has been counseled, then finish your day's surgicals.
2. Instruct the supervisor to take that channel of the analyzer off-line until it can be evaluated by the vendor and fixed.
3. Contact all the physician's involved and tell them that the previous results may have been erroneous.

# What would you do?

You are the laboratory medical director at a 400 bed metropolitan, tertiary care hospital. The Chief of Neurology has begun ordering a molecular genetic “neuropathy” panel which costs the hospital \$4500 a specimen. The hospital administrator tells you that the insurance companies do not cover this test. She wants you to “take care of this problem.” What do you do?

# Influential Medical Staff Member Orders Expensive Testing

1. Tell the administrator that this is the hospital's problem, so she should confront the Chief of Neurology.
2. Order the lab's Send Out supervisor to cancel any new order for this test.
3. Research the medical appropriateness of this particular molecular genetic test.
4. Arrange to meet with the Chief of Neurology to discuss his reasons for wanting to order this expensive, non-reimbursed test.

# What would you do?

As part of the health system's initiative to expand its primary care network and eventually become an Accountable Care Organization, your hospital CEO is planning to build a large outpatient clinic at a remote site in the city. The clinic will need support from your laboratory. As the laboratory medical director what do you tell the administrator?

# Administration wants to expand service coverage

1. You tell the administrator that this will not be a problem, and leave it at that.
2. Ask her for more specifics on the size of the clinic, the hours of operation, the anticipated patient mix and the physician specialties that will staff the clinic.
3. Meet with your administrative staff in the laboratory to discuss this proposal and come to a decision on how to respond.
4. Tell the administrator that you cannot be responsible for any testing performed outside of the hospital itself.

# What would you do?

You are the laboratory medical director of a large academic medical center hospital. The supervisor of the hematology laboratory comes to you very upset. The Chief of Hematology/Oncology, an internationally respected physician, just walked out of the laboratory after verbally abusing one of the technologists in front of her co-workers, reducing her to tears. What should you do?

# Verbally abusive faculty member

1. Tell the supervisor to console the technologist and to ignore the incident because “that is just how that physician is.”
2. Contact the Chief Medical Officer of the hospital to report the incident and ask her to “fix it.”
3. Contact the Human Resources department to report the incident and ask for their advice.
4. Arrange to meet with the Chief of Hem/Onc to discuss the incident.

# The Effective & Successful Pathologist Leader

- Demonstrate your vital role to patient care...your “value proposition”
- Work closely with all your constituencies
  - Laboratory, hospital administration, medical staff, community, and regulatory agencies
- Manage limited resources prudently, but with clinical effectiveness
- Be an effective communicator
- Continually improve, embrace change for the better and help others to change

# New Opportunities & Responsibilities for LMD's

1. More now than ever, lead the clinically effective and cost effective use of your resources.
2. Develop new tools for medical knowledge creation, innovation in patient care and in medical decision making.
3. Fit into the evolution of health care delivery models.
4. Educate and guide other health care providers in the most effective use of new diagnostic tools and of limited resources.

# If you still want to be an LMD...

- Resources:
  - The ASCP, the American Pathology Foundation and the CAP management learning opportunities
  - “A Consensus Curriculum for Laboratory Management Training for Pathology Residents”
    - ASCP/APF/PRODS Work Group; [www.ascp.org/LabMgt](http://www.ascp.org/LabMgt)
  - The CAP LMD Certificate Program
- Reference:
  - Friedberg RC, Rauch CA. “The Role of the Medical Laboratory Director,” in *Laboratory Management*. Friedberg RC, Weiss RL (eds.) Clinics in Lab Manag 2007;27(4):719-731

# Questions