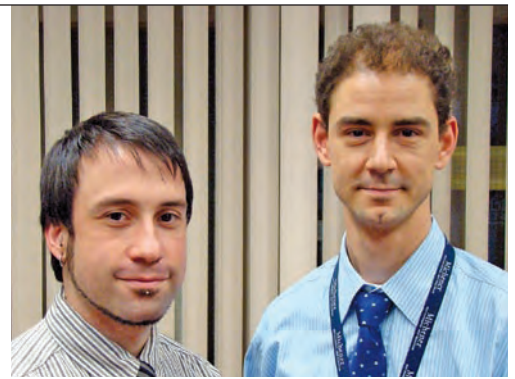


Education

The Clinical Laboratory Quality Manager Graduate Certificate Program



Establishing quality service standards is a priority and a requirement in any clinical laboratory. Historically, it fell upon the laboratory manager to establish and maintain a standard of quality in his/her own operation. However, upon the implementation of Ontario Laboratory Accreditation (OLA) in 2003, the need for laboratories to conform to consistent quality requirements based on International Organization for Standardization (ISO) guidelines opened up an entirely new niche of work for the Medical Laboratory Technologist (MLT). As laboratories began the extensive re-organization required to bring their operations in line with the new standards, it became necessary to dedicate personnel to the task of complying with OLA standards. It was at this time that The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences perceived a need for qualified experts who understood the requirements and could develop and maintain the quality management systems necessary to meet them. In response to this growing need, Michener developed the Clinical Laboratory Quality Manager Graduate Certificate Program to assist medical laboratory technologists in developing the skills and competencies required to excel in this demanding new position.

The Clinical Laboratory Quality Manager (CLQM) is responsible for establishing and maintaining quality policies, processes, and procedures within their laboratory. Primarily, their role involves ensuring compliance with all regulatory requirements including OLA standards. To support this role, they are called upon to perform a variety of functions including conducting gap analysis and developing, implementing, and maintaining a quality management system. The guidelines set out by OLA require an attention to detail as well as an ability to perceive the entire operation in a holistic manner in order to achieve consistency in practices. A CLQM will manage the requirements with their clinical laboratory colleagues within the context

of the evolving needs of the laboratory and the evolving quality standards. Concepts of quality management can be applied to all lab settings including diagnostic, research, and pharmaceutical, and because the standards are based upon the International Laboratory Standards (ISO 15189) they are applicable both nationally and internationally.

Laboratory quality management professionals are in short supply and high demand in the healthcare sector. The Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI HS1), which form the basis for laboratory accreditation requirements in Ontario, establish the need for all clinical laboratories to designate a Quality Manager, resulting in the creation of new positions across the province and in other juris-

dictions, nationally and internationally. Many of the applicants to the CLQM Certificate Program are medical laboratory technologists who are looking for an alternative career path within the clinical laboratory environment. Becoming a CLQM provides the opportunity to maintain practice and engagement with medical laboratory procedures while expanding skill and competency sets. In addition, the responsibilities of a Quality Manager provide a macro level understanding of the clinical laboratory as a whole which provides context and a whole new perspective on the duties of a medical laboratory technologist which might not be seen from the bench.

Clinical Laboratory Quality Managers report directly to the level of management where decisions are made on laboratory policy and resources. It is an exciting career direction with considerable growth potential as

experienced laboratory managers are retiring, leaving few laboratory personnel with the necessary quality management skills to fill the position. Ontario is not the only province to emphasize quality management in the medical laboratory; quality managers are needed nationwide and it is likely that demand will grow internationally.

The Clinical Laboratory Quality Manager Graduate Certificate Program offered by Michener is a 20 month program delivered in online format. It consists of five courses, all focusing on different aspects of quality management. This certificate program will prepare students to design, implement, maintain, and improve a quality management system. Students learn how to create a customized qual-

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ity management system to meet the specific needs of their laboratory. In addition, focus is placed on refining fundamental communication skills, working with teams and the essentials of project management as well as the use of quality improvement tools and techniques, including process mapping, benchmarking, root cause analysis, and gap analysis.

The online learning environment and comprehensive nature of the course content, including its conformance to international standards, makes this an excellent program choice for individuals interested in laboratory quality management here in Ontario as well as around the world.

For more information on the Clinical Laboratory Quality Manager Graduate Certificate Program at The Michener Institute, please visit our website: <http://www.michener.ca/ce/postdiploma/clqm.php>. ❖

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