



Renewing Customer Communication for the Medical Laboratory

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In this presentation...

- What is happening in medical laboratories today with respect to listening to customers.
- Current strategies
- Some more active approaches that can be implemented.
- How to monitor customer opinions as a quality indicator.

It can be tough to think about Customer Service in many laboratories these days

In the “olden days”

- Technologists had patient contact every day
- Physicians came to the laboratory to find their results.
- Patient reports were hand written.
- Reports were signed off by hand.
- Laboratory workers were personally aware of the 4Cs

Today

- In patient contact in some laboratories, but not many.
- Physicians rarely if ever go to the laboratory anymore.
- Patient reports are written in “computerese”.
- Nobody signs off anything.
- What are the 4Cs?

LABORATORIES AS SERVICE SECTOR

LABORATORIES ARE INDUSTRY SECTOR

Quality and the 4Cs of Customer Communication

Complaints
C oncerns
C omments
C ompliments



*What ARE people saying
about your laboratory?*

The Obvious Question...

*So why is communicating with
our customers so important?*

The definition of Quality



- The FIRST Absolute

**Quality is defined as meeting
the needs and requirements
of your Customer.**

Do you know

- who is your customer?
- what are your customer's needs and requirements?
- if you are meeting your customer's needs and requirements
- does your customer know if you are working towards meeting their needs and requirements?
- If your customer's requirements changed?

Customer focus is a medical laboratory quality expectation and an accreditation requirement

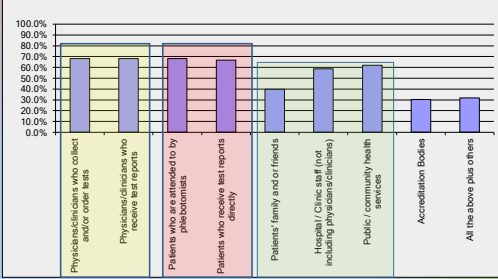
- **ISO 15189:2012**
medical laboratories- requirements for quality and competence
- College of American Pathologists
Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments
- Accreditation Canada / Joint Commission
- **ISO 9001:2015**
Quality Management Requirements

So how are laboratories gathering customer opinions now?

- On-line survey (September 2016)
- Single call-out invitation
- Participants in our POLQM Certificate Course in LQM
- Participants from Across Canada, some from US, Saudi Arabia, Cambodia, China
- Anonymous responses only
- Information reward
- Commentary allowed.

Monitoring Laboratory Customers

In your opinion who should a medical laboratory consider as an external customer? You can choose one or any of the groups



Gathering Customer Opinions

In your current position which of the following "customer needs" monitoring techniques are used by laboratory management and the Quality team. You can respond with a single, or multiple, or all

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Satisfaction surveys, either electronic or paper that are directed towards Physicians/clinicians	59.0%	36
Satisfaction surveys, either electronic or paper that are directed towards hospital/clinic staff	44.3%	27
Satisfaction surveys, either electronic or paper that are directed towards patients	59.0%	36
Information gathered from received (passively) complaints from physicians/clinicians	78.7%	48
Information gathered from received (passively) complaints from patients	70.5%	43
Information gathered from received (passively) complaints from others	39.3%	24
We also can actively seek out customer complaints, comments, concerns and complements.	31.1%	19
I don't have an opinion on this - or - I don't work in a laboratory or organization that gathers this information.	18.0%	11
Other (please specify)		3
<i>answered question</i>		61

How Do I interpret these results?

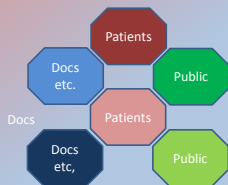
- With caution, the data suggests that:
 - Even in laboratories with staff with interest in laboratory quality management
 1. Perhaps as high as 30 percent do not have a customer monitoring programs in place
 2. For laboratories that do, the most common approaches to customer monitoring are PASSIVE.
 3. Some laboratories are working with on-line surveys

The Medical Laboratory Has Many Customers

(People who use/require/rely upon your product or service with an expectation of performance.)

1. Physicians who order tests
2. Physicians who receive results
3. Patients who have direct laboratory contact
4. Patients who have direct access to results
5. Public health in all its guises
 1. Infection control
 2. Community health
6. Family, Friends, Contacts
7. Others?

The Medical Laboratory Has Many Customers



- While these groups may have some overlap, they each have different needs and requirements that must be met.

A Comment on the Customer Comment Card



- Positives
 - Provides an opportunity to comment on service
- Negatives
 - **Passive**
 - If comment cards are not accessible, no Cs are received.
 - Captures only those sufficiently irate they will seek out the card
 - **Incomplete and biased**

The modern version of website such as BCPSLS are fundamentally modern variations of the Comment Card with the similar result.

Who Gets Missed with Passive Monitoring

- The Physician who contacts the laboratory physician and lodges a complaint over the phone (or email).
- The Physician who expresses a concern in conversation.
- The Patient who complains to their family doc.
- The Patient (or their family) that sits and fumes, but is afraid to complain in fear of possible consequences.
- Those who are steamed but don't have immediate access to a computer.
- **The Patient or Physician who had a really positive experience but doesn't know where or how to reach out and tell someone**

On-Line Surveys

• Positives

- **Active** process
- Relatively easy to set up
- Easy to analyze
- Potentially repeatable for long term evaluation

• Negatives

- Most on-line surveys are self defeating with a HIGH probability of unreliable information
- Done poorly, on-line surveys are "worse than not doing any investigation"

Think about your own experience with on-line surveys

Probably...

You (if you are anything like me),

- Rarely open them.
- Rarely complete them.
- Rarely provide useful information
- Get annoyed if surveys are:
 - Too intrusive
 - Too long
 - Too complicated

Think about your own experience with on-line surveys

- If you want useful information ask people for the right information in the right way.
- If you want to guarantee failure, intrude on your customers' time, effort, and patience, and generosity.

Noble's Rules for successful surveys

- Never ask more than 10 questions.
- Never ask for more than 3 minutes of time.
- Pre-test and keep the questions simple.
- To the extent possible, avoid personal demographics.
- Never force an answer.
- Always provide contextual choices and an option to comment.
- Ask the questions than need to be asked, even if you may not like the answer.
- To the extent possible, offer a reward for participation.

<http://www.medicallaboratoryquality.com/2011/06/satisfaction.html>

Try this strategy for on-line Satisfaction Surveying for LARGE groups

- Many laboratories do a Mega survey once a year to get mega-opinion.
- Another approach is to do a Mini survey once a month to get a series of mini-opinions. At the end of the year you have Really Good Information.
- Another approach is to set up a Micro survey every day, and get a series of micro-opinions.

Advantages of Sequential Analysis

- Each group is small, but large enough to give a snapshot of attitudes
- Since each group is getting the same survey, the information gives a series of snapshots
- A series of snapshots provides for trend analysis rather an "single moment in time".
- Series strategy can allow monitoring point-in-time changes.

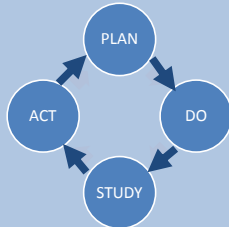
How To Reward Participants

Allow responders to see the accumulated results after they complete the survey.

Give responders access to a "participant" site for the total results at a set time upon completion.

Once You Have the Information...

Are people satisfied with what you are doing?
How can we do better the Deming way?



As a LAST thought

- Complaints, Concerns, Comments, Compliments cross the scope and spectrum of Customer Conversation.
 - Most 4Cs do not come in the form of completed complaint cards, but as an E-mail or Telephone call or hallway chats.
 - Are **all these Cs** being captured and followed through?

In summary...

- There is room to grow interest in monitoring customer complaints, concerns, comments and compliments in medical laboratories.
- There are a variety of methods than can be implemented to help listen to our customers.

In summary...

Following customer satisfaction is at the very core of Quality and following customer satisfaction is appropriate and essential in the medical laboratory.

There is room to grow interest in monitoring customer opinions and satisfaction in medical laboratories.

Establishing customer satisfaction indicators is no more complicated than any other Quality Indicator.

in conclusion...

*Get Back to the
OLDEN DAYS*

With MODERN WAYS

Have the Conversation with your Customers

- Identify your Customer**
- Identify the Methodology**
- Track Performance**
- Enhance Continual Quality Improvement**
