

## A Call for Action to Maintain a Culture of Quality in the Clinical Laboratory

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### Keywords

Culture of quality, Organization, Continuous improvement.

This is a call for action from each of you to sustain a culture of quality; however, we must all speak the same language by defining the terms used in quality. What is culture? What is quality? What is laboratory quality? What is a culture of quality? Culture is an expression of the employee's behavior and the meanings attached to their actions as well as how an organization is viewed or perceived both internally and externally. Quality is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "the degree of excellence". Laboratory quality is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as accuracy, reliability, and timeliness of the reported test results. The laboratory results must be as accurate as possible, all aspects of the laboratory operations must be reliable, and reporting must be timely in order to be useful in a clinical or public health setting. The culture of quality is the degree of excellence defining the characteristic features of and associated with the laboratory's work product.

It is essential for our organization to maintain a culture of quality to continue to be productive, successful, effective and efficient. We must all adopt and foster a Kaizen mindset of "change for the better" and "continuous improvement". Per ISO/IEC 17025:2005, we have the foundation to maintain a culture of quality by having a shared value system that promotes a continuous improvement philosophy at the mission, structure, management, competence, communication and customer levels of our organization. All of

these six categories have integrated 5 principles, namely, continual improvement, ethos, pathos, logos and effectiveness. Ethos refers to the moral character or fundamental beliefs of a person, including ethics, credibility and integrity. Moreover, pathos is a quality of a person that senses a strong feeling of compassion. In addition, logos refers to the principle order or logical reasoning, which is applied to intellect and competence. Effectiveness is the degree to which goals and objectives are achieved, which have been defined by our organization's mission, goals and objectives. Thus, it is important to have a quality mindset, the difference between just meeting the requirement and being effective and always exceeding the expectations. It is through this framework that we can "Deliver a quality product (time-sensitive laboratory information), throughout quality awareness by every employee and department at Interpath Laboratory, to clients and their customers (patients)".

In summary, this is a call for action and an individual responsibility to sustain a culture of quality by putting emphasis on best practices, instead of meeting the minimum requirements. By embracing a culture of quality, we will influence the organization's strength, stability, performance, retention, innovation, agility and competitiveness that directly affects customer satisfaction. Remember, quality is having a forward vision – Quality Policy. Quality starts with everyone at all levels within the organization. Quality starts with knowing what to do – Procedures. Quality starts with understanding how you need to do it – Training and Competence. Quality understands how daily tasks connect to the bigger picture – Organizational Charts and Process Flows. Quality

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is assessing objectives – Key Performance Indicator Management. Quality is process verification – Internal Audits. Quality is updating Management – Management Review and Organizational Communication. Quality is evolving and adapting – Continual Improvement. Quality is reporting issues and resolving them – Complaints and Corrective and Preventative Actions (CAPAs).

The leadership and the Department of Quality have expectations and request employee involvement by embracing a culture of quality. We are insisting that all employees instill a sense of employee ownership, empowerment, and obligation for quality in the organization.