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Learning Objectives

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

➢ Recognize the role of customer satisfaction in a quality management system.

➢ Explore methods for providing clear and relevant information to laboratory clients.

➢ Understand the various methods for gathering customer feedback

➢ Explore digital reporting systems and their role in optimizing turnaround time.

➢ Develop skills to handle customer complaints with empathy and professionalism.

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Question 1

A laboratory has received multiple complaints regarding slow turnaround times for test results. Considering the importance of feedback and stakeholder engagement, which approach would most effectively address this issue while fostering a culture of continuous improvement?

(A) Implement an advocacy campaign to raise awareness about laboratory processes.

(B) Introduce digital reporting systems to streamline communication with stakeholders.

(C) Focus solely on training laboratory staff to handle complaints more efficiently.

(D) Increase the number of laboratory personnel to reduce workload.

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Question 2

A patient complains about unclear test results and poor communication from the laboratory staff. Which action is most appropriate for improving customer service?

(A) Provide a standardized patient-friendly explanation of test results.

(B) Refer all patient concerns to senior management without direct response.

(C) Ask patients to conduct their own research to understand results.

(D) Prioritize only high-profile patients when addressing concerns.

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Question 3

Which of the following strategies best promotes stakeholder engagement in laboratory quality improvement?

(A) Regular meetings with healthcare providers to align laboratory services with clinical needs.

(B) Restricting stakeholder communication to email-only correspondence.

(C) Prioritizing technical advancements over patient-centered care.

(D) Limiting access to quality data to only laboratory staff.

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Essentials of an Effective Customer Service Programme in the Laboratory

- ➢ **Customer satisfaction** is a key element of a quality management system.

- ➢ It is a major focus in **ISO standards**.

- ➢ A laboratory's **primary product** is the **test result**.

- ➢ If customers are not well served, the **laboratory fails in its primary function**.

- ➢ Changing customer expectations due to comparative experience

- Quality isn't just about meeting standards—it's about **exceeding expectations** and staying relevant.

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Quality in the Clinical Laboratory: Meeting Customer Requirements

➢ **Philip Crosby**: Defined quality as **meeting customer requirements**.

➢ Originally applied to business & manufacturing, but relevant to medical laboratories.

➢ Laboratories must identify their **clients** and understand their **needs**.

➢ Laboratory Customers include:

- **Healthcare Providers (Clinical Customers)**

- **Patients (End Users)**

- **Administrative and Regulatory Bodies**

- **Public Health and Community Stakeholders**

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Roles and Responsibilities in Ensuring Customer Satisfaction

➢ **Laboratory Director**: Ensures customer needs are met.

➢ **Quality Manager**:

- Measures customer satisfaction.
- Uses surveys, indicators, and audits.
- Implements preventive and corrective actions.

➢ **All Laboratory Staff**:

- Must recognize the **importance of customer satisfaction**.
- Engage with customers **appropriately and courteously**.
- Provide **clear and relevant information**.

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Key Requirements for Seeking Customer Satisfaction

➢ **Commitment**

- Must be prioritized alongside **technical competency**.
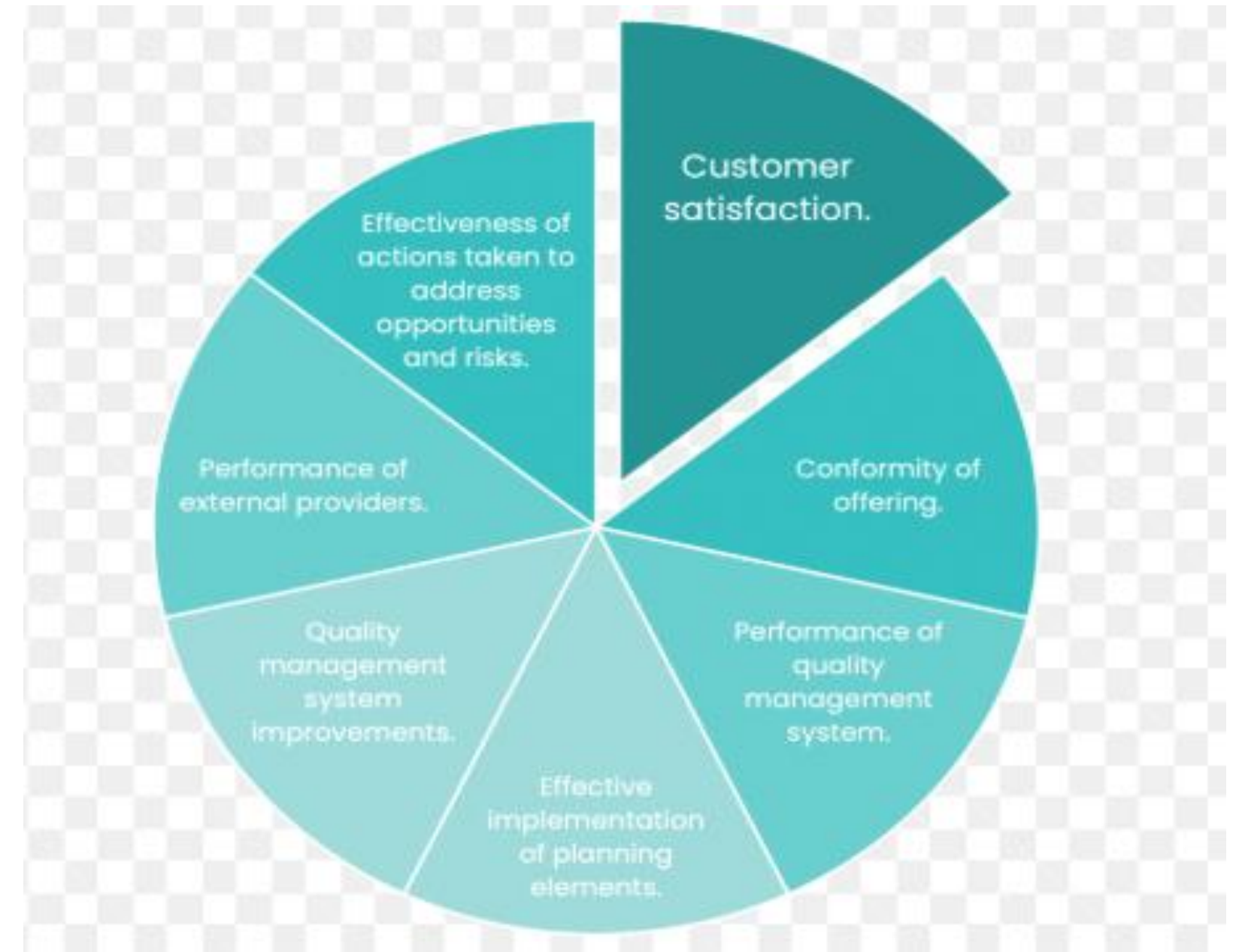
➢ **Planning**

- Poor planning leads to **uninterpretable data**.

➢ **Knowledge**

- May require **training or expert consultation**.

➢ **Resources**

- **Not highly resource-intensive**, but requires time.

- Tools like **calculators, computers, and internet access** improve efficiency

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Question 4

A patient complains about poor service at a laboratory, citing unresponsive front desk staff and a phlebotomist who did not explain the procedure. Who is responsible for ensuring customer satisfaction in this case?

A. Only the laboratory director

B. Only the phlebotomist and receptionist

C. Everyone in the laboratory, including management and staff.

D. Only the quality assurance team since customer satisfaction is their role

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Meeting Healthcare Provider Expectations

➢ **Pre-Examination Phase:**

- User-friendly requisition forms.

- Efficient specimen collection & transport system.

➢ **Examination (Testing) Phase:**

- Competent personnel and validated test methods.

- Effective management of errors and adverse occurrences.

➢ **Post-Examination Phase:**

- Results verification and timely delivery.

- A solid Laboratory Information System (LIS).

- Easily interpretable results sent to the right place.

Meeting Patient Expectations

- **Patients expect:**

  - Personal care, comfort, and privacy.

  - Assurance of accurate and timely testing.

- **Laboratory actions to meet patient needs:**

  - Provide clear specimen collection instructions.

  - Ensure good collection facilities.

  - Employ trained, courteous personnel.

  - Maintain secure and retrievable records.

  - Protect patient confidentiality.

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4.3 Requirements regarding patients

Laboratory management shall ensure that patients' well-being, safety and rights are the primary considerations. The laboratory shall establish and implement the following processes:

a) opportunities for patients and laboratory users to provide helpful information to aid the laboratory in the selection of the examination methods, and the interpretation of the examination results;

b) provision of patients and users with publicly available information about the examination process, including costs when applicable, and when to expect results;

c) periodic review of the examinations offered by the laboratory to ensure they are clinically appropriate and necessary;

d) where appropriate, disclosure to patients, users and any other relevant persons, of incidents that resulted or could have resulted in patient harm, and records of actions taken to mitigate those harms;

e) treatment of patients, samples, or remains, with due care and respect;

f) obtaining informed consent when required;

g) ensuring the ongoing availability and integrity of retained patient samples and records in the event of the closure, acquisition or merger of the laboratory;

h) making relevant information available to a patient and any other health service provider at the request of the patient or the request of a healthcare provider acting on their behalf;

i) upholding the rights of patients to care that is free from discrimination.

Customer Requirements

Patient

Information: Provision of clear information during arrival time at the sample collection area

Safety: Well-maintained flooring to prevent slips and falls in the lab or waiting area.

Comfort: Cleanliness and seating capacity of the waiting area

Personnel Availability of lab personnel at reception

Privacy: Confidential handling of patient test requests and results.

Healthcare Provider

Reliable Results: Quality/reliability of results. Adequacy of tests

Timely Results: Timely communication of results. Notification of panic results. Urgent services

Interpretable Results: Clinical lab interface. Result completeness. Lab request form

Others: Availability of handbook. Adequacy of test menu. Resolving complaints. Advisory services. Lab handbook helpfulness

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Question 5

A patient undergoing repeated blood tests at a laboratory complains about long wait times and lack of privacy during sample collection. What is the best way for the laboratory to address these concerns?

A. Apologize but explain that delays are inevitable in healthcare

B. Implement a queue management system, provide comfortable waiting areas, and ensure private collection spaces.

C. Speed up sample collection without following safety protocols to reduce waiting time

D. Ignore the complaint since laboratory accuracy is more important than patient comfort

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Administrative & Regulatory Bodies
Expectations from Laboratories

Body	Purpose of Laboratory Test Results
Regulatory Authorities	• Quality inspections & audits • Disease surveillance • Policy development • Compliance verification (e.g., ISO 15189, MoH)
Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs)	• Claims verification • Utilization review • Cost control • Enrolment screening & pre-authorizations

Some Crucial Reasons Regulatory Compliance Is Necessary For Medical Labs:

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Quality Assurance

Accreditation

Patient Safety

Legal Compliance

Ethical Considerations
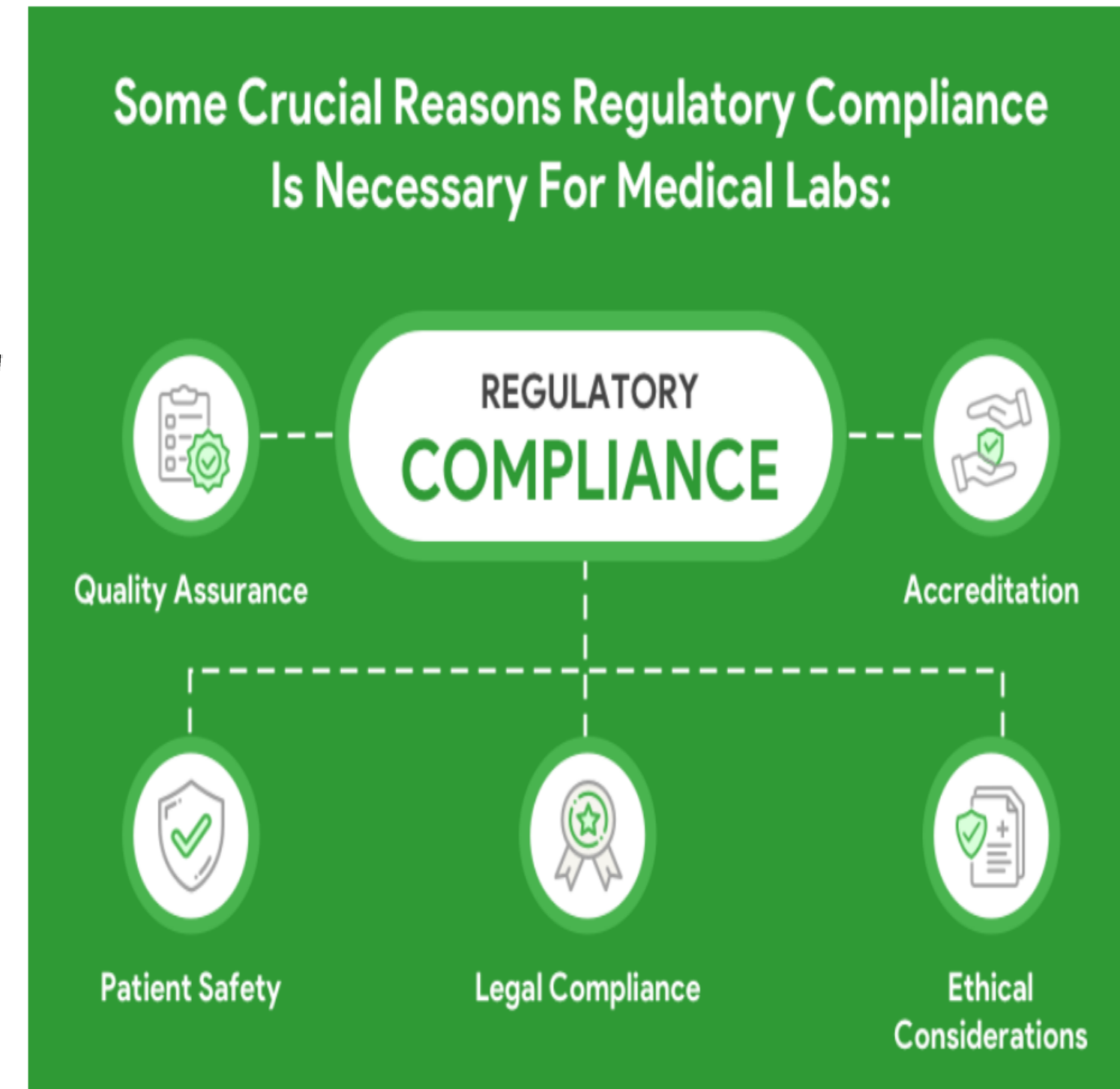
Public Health and Community Expectations from Laboratories

➢ **Public Health Professionals' Needs:**

- Accurate pre-examination, examination, and post-examination processes.

- Special collection processes/forms for outbreaks or investigations.

- Emphasis on safety, containment, and infectious material management.

➢ **Community Expectations:**

- Safe handling and containment of hazardous materials.

- Protection of laboratory workers and the public.

- Awareness of communicable disease alerts and surveillance efforts.

- Proper waste management and compliance with transport regulations.

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Importance of Quality Systems and Customer Service

➢ **Quality system implementation ensures:**

- Accreditation and adherence to high standards.

- Accurate, reliable test results.

➢ **Benefits of good customer service:**

- Better patient care through valuable lab information.

- Enhanced public health surveillance and response.

- Professional and trusted laboratory image.

➢ **Customer service is an integral part of a Quality Management System (QMS).**

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Question 6

During an outbreak of a highly contagious disease, a public health official contacts the laboratory for urgent test results and guidance on sample collection. What is the laboratory's primary responsibility in this situation?

A. Provide test results only to the requesting physician and ignore public health officials

B. Share patient details with the public to increase awareness

C. Collaborate with public health officials by providing timely results and clear guidelines on sample collection while maintaining patient confidentiality.

D. Refuse to handle public health cases since they are not direct-paying clients

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Tools for Monitoring Customer Satisfaction

➤ **Proactive Approach to Customer Feedback**

- The laboratory must **actively seek feedback** rather than waiting for complaints.

➤ **Key Methods for Gathering Information:**

- **Complaint Monitoring** – Identifies recurring issues.

- **Quality Indicators** – Measures timeliness, errors, and patient refusals.

- **Internal Audits** – Evaluates practices affecting customer satisfaction.

- **Management Reviews** – Assesses service effectiveness.

- **Satisfaction Surveys** – Collects direct feedback from clients.

- **Interviews & Focus Groups** – Engages customers for deeper insights.

Addressing Customer Complaints & Quality Indicators

➤ **Handling Customer Complaints**

- Complaints provide critical insights but may represent only a small fraction of issues.

- Every complaint should be investigated thoroughly, followed by corrective action.

➤ **Using Quality Indicators to Improve Satisfaction**

- Indicators track timeliness, errors, patient refusals, and report delays.

- Monitoring these metrics helps the lab identify trends and take preventive action.

- Internal audits assess turnaround times—a major concern for physicians.

- Findings should be carefully reviewed by management and addressed with improvement plans.

Addressing Customer Complaints as a KPI for Enhanced Quality

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Managing Complaints and Feedback

➢ **Importance of Feedback**

- Feedback as a tool for continuous improvement.

- Types of feedback: Positive, constructive, and complaints.

➢ **Handling Complaints Effectively**

- Steps: Acknowledge, investigate, resolve, and follow up.

- Role of empathy and professionalism in complaint resolution.

01 Listen actively without interruptions

02 Empathize and acknowledge the frustration

03 Apologize sincerely

04 Clarify the issue

05 Offer a solution and set clear expectations

GENERAL TIPS FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

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Question 7

A physician reports that they frequently receive incomplete test reports from the laboratory, making it difficult to make clinical decisions. What should the laboratory do to meet healthcare provider expectations?

A. Ask the physician to contact the laboratory for clarification each time

B. Ensure all test reports include essential details such as reference ranges and result interpretation.

C. Limit test reporting to only numerical values to reduce complexity

D. Reduce the frequency of reports sent to avoid overwhelming the physician

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Customer Surveys & Feedback Methods

➢ **Why Conduct Customer Surveys?**

- Helps the laboratory actively gather feedback beyond complaints.

- Addresses specific concerns not covered by internal processes.

- Required by **ISO 15189 standards** for quality management.

➢ **Methods for Collecting Feedback:**

- **Surveys (paper-based or electronic)** – Structured questionnaires for clients.

- **Interviews** – One-on-one discussions with structured and open-ended questions.

- **Focus Groups** – Small group discussions to generate deeper insights.

The Guide to Collecting Customer Feedback with Surveys

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Best Practices for Conducting Surveys & Focus Groups

- **Survey Best Practices:**

- Choose **appropriate clients** (health care providers, patients, lab staff).

- Pretest questionnaires for **clarity and neutrality**.

- Analyze results **promptly** and share key findings.

- **Interview Tips:**
✓ Prepare **consistent questions** for all participants.
✓ Include **open-ended** questions to encourage feedback.
✓ Ask, **"How can the laboratory improve its service?"**

- **Focus Group Considerations:**
✓ **8–10 participants** with diverse backgrounds.
✓ Build trust before discussing key topics.
✓ Use a structured **focus group guide** for consistency.
✓ Summarize responses in a **written report** for improvement.

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Measuring Customer Satisfaction & Continuous Improvement

➤ **Measuring Customer Satisfaction**

. Methods: Surveys, Indicators, Audits

. Helps identify Opportunities for Improvement (OFI)

. Leads to Preventive & Corrective Actions

➤ **Key Takeaways:**

✔ Successful information gathering → Meaningful insights

✔ Insights → Actionable improvements

✔ Continuous improvement is essential for quality management

7 Steps to Measure Customer Satisfaction

1 Determine Your Goal
2 Outline Your Plan
3 Select KPIs
4 Choose Survey Tools
5 Design Your Surveys
6 Analyze results
7 Implement Changes

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Advisory activities

5.3.3   Advisory activities

Laboratory management shall ensure that appropriate laboratory advice and interpretation are available and meet the needs of patients and users.

The laboratory shall establish arrangements for communicating with laboratory users on the following when applicable:

a)   advising on choice and use of examinations, including required type of sample, clinical indications and limitations of examination methods; and the frequency of requesting the examination;

b)   providing professional judgments on the interpretation of the results of examinations;

c)   promoting the effective utilization of laboratory examinations;

d)   advising on scientific and logistical matters such as instances of failure of sample(s) to meet acceptability criteria.

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Question 8

Despite having a well-equipped facility, a laboratory receives negative feedback from physicians and patients about unclear communication regarding test requirements and result interpretation. What key action should be taken to improve customer satisfaction?

A. Ignore feedback, as equipment quality is the most important factor

B. Ensure effective communication, conduct customer surveys, and provide staff training.

C. Dismiss patients' concerns since they are not medical professionals

D. Assume that physicians will interpret the results correctly on their own

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Strategies to Improve Patient and Health Provider Interactions

➢ **Patient-Centered Care**

- Empathy and active listening.

- Clear communication of test procedures and expected timelines.

➢ **Clinician Collaboration**

- Regular updates on new tests and lab capabilities

- Providing interpretative comments on complex test results.

➢ **Training and Development**

 - Role-playing and communication skills workshops for staff.

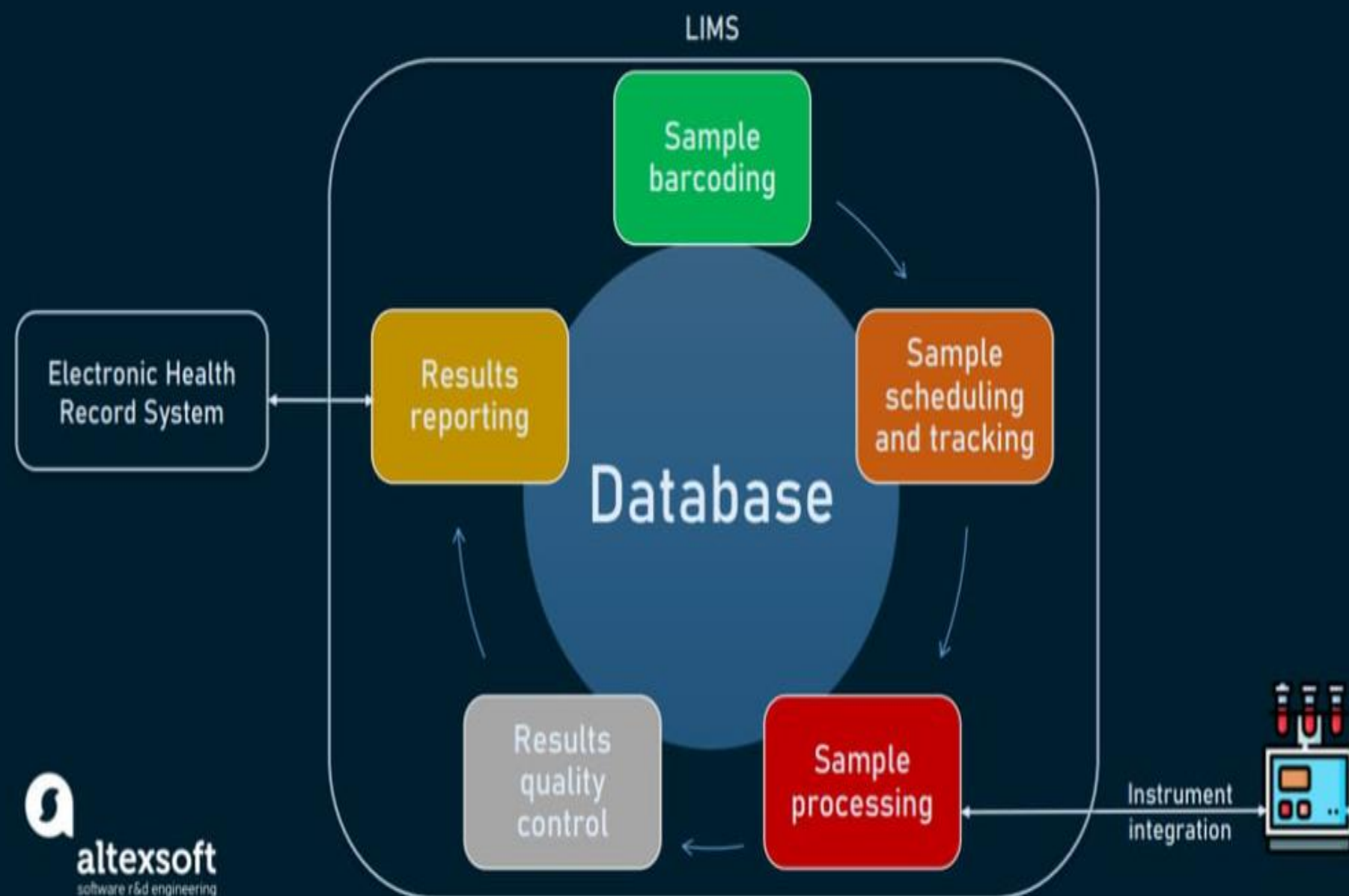 Continuous professional development in customer service.

Digital Reporting systems & Turnaround Time Optimization

SAMPLE MANAGEMENT WITH LABORATORY INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Madu, *et al.*: Adoption of ICT in health facilities

Table 3: Frequency of responses on the extent of impact of electronic patients' platforms on improved patient care and satisfaction

On the volume of patients	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Our institution can review and receive more patients using the e-platforms	18 (7.6%)	62 (26.3%)	103 (43.6%)	37 (16.7%)	16 (6.8%)
The efficiency of e-patient platforms allows for faster and better interactions between the pharmacy and clinic/wards	66 (28%)	102 (43.2%)	47 (19.9%)	11 (4.7%)	10 (4.2%)
The efficiency of e-patient platforms allows for faster and better interactions between the lab/radiology and clinic/wards	71 (30.1%)	100 (42.4%)	46 (19.5%)	9 (3.8%)	10 (4.2%)
The duration of waiting time has been reduced since patients no longer need to physically carry their investigation forms or receipts from point to point	55 (23.3%)	79 (33.5%)	59 (25%)	29 (12.3%)	14 (5.9%)
Patients in the clinics have faster review and turnaround time					
Patients in the clinics have faster review and turnaround time	36 (15.3%)	78 (33.1%)	73 (30.9%)	34 (14.4%)	15 (6.4%)
Patients clinical details are easily available on the e-platform	77 (32.6%)	101 (42.8%)	41 (17.4%)	10 (4.2%)	7 (3.0%)
Clinics now have less crowds	20 (8.5%)	48 (20.3%)	92 (39%)	51 (21.6%)	25 (10.6%)
Referrals are now easy and delays have been eliminated for the review of referred cases	33 (14%)	74 (31.4%)	76 (32.2%)	37 (15.7%)	16 (6.8%)
The patients are happier at the pace of their movement through various parts of the facility	30 (12.7%)	74 (31.4%)	86 (36.4%)	28 (11.9%)	18 (7.6%)
With electronic patient management systems and happy they no longer carry forms and prescriptions	45 (19.1%)	87 (36.9%)	70 (29.7%)	24 (10.2%)	10 (4.2%)
The excess workload has been reduced in your unit in the past 3 years	17 (7.2%)	47 (19.9%)	104 (44.1%)	46 (19.5%)	22 (9.3%)
Information on the digital folders can easily be sent or received from another health facility on the same platform	56 (23.7%)	78 (33.1%)	73 (30.9%)	18 (7.6%)	11 (4.7%)

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Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

➢ **Building Strong Relationships**

- Regular meetings and progress reports.

- Collaborative decision-making and shared goals.

-Establishing laboratory liaison officers for better clinician-lab interaction

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Challenges and Solutions

➢ **Common challenges**

- Resistance to change.

- Lack of awareness about laboratory processes.

- Communication breakdowns.

➢ **Practical solutions**

- Advocacy and awareness campaigns.

- Training programs for stakeholders on laboratory procedures.

- Leveraging technology for improved communication.

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Conclusion

- Effective communication fosters trust, while stakeholder engagement ensures continuous quality improvement and compliance with international standards

- By integrating digital reporting systems, standardizing processes, and prioritizing feedback, laboratories can build a culture of excellence.

QUESTIONS???

Relating to the day's topic

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Final words:

🚀 **Customer delight is the heartbeat of quality management, driving excellence through every interaction** 🚀

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Thank You

NEXT WEEK:

Occurrence Management & Nonconformance Handling in Laboratories by Dr Myke-Mbata B.K

- Best practices for incident reporting, documentation, and root cause identification
- Using data analytics for trend monitoring and error prevention
- Implementing corrective actions to mitigate laboratory nonconformities

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