

MEDLAB: Lab management or leadership - what's the difference?



MEDLAB Europe continued today with a packed session focusing on laboratory management.

Chaired by Dr Ernesto Casis, Clinical Director of Hospital Universitari Vall d'Hebron in Barcelona and Carlo Kaabar, Laboratory Manager at Al Zahra Hospital in the UAE, leading lab professionals addressed delegates from all over Europe.

The session started with Kaabar speaking on the topic of 'Leadership and employee engagement: A formula for success'.

"No more than ever this is the time we need to lead and move forward with our people," he told delegates.

Kabaar made the distinction between management and leadership, explaining that lab directors sometimes confuse them. "Leadership is an activity, a responsibility. It's more than a position. Management is the practical stuff."

Referring to increasing pressures on lab personnel and the transforming impact of technology, particularly in lab automation, Kabaar said a good leader needed to encourage staff engagement for an inspired communal vision amongst personnel. He cited a 2017 Gallup poll that showed concerning low-level employee engagement in Western Europe, particularly in France, Spain and Italy, across multiple sectors.

[See also: MEDLAB: POCT Challenges and opportunities](#)

"The low level of engagement means there is a disconnect between the employee and the leader. Let's be fair on ourselves. We are busy in the lab. We are dealing with finance and quality control. People are just a part of that. I'm arguing that if we make people a priority everything else would flow. Think about how low-level engagement translates into healthcare when we have the patient's life in our hands," he said.

Kabaar also suggested a change of professional title from Medical Scientist to Information Specialist to reflect the changing face of lab medicine. "We are not producing test results but information. By 2020, the lab medicine market will be worth \$150 bln dollars. We will still be on the healthcare landscape but we need to innovate."

Further laboratory management topics included laboratory consolidation, the future of diagnostics and competence management while a second MEDLAB track focused on anatomic pathology.

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