

Accreditation: Supporting the Delivery of Health and Social Care



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June 9, 2015 marks **World Accreditation Day** as a global initiative, jointly established by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), to raise awareness of the importance of accreditation. This year's theme focuses on how accreditation can support the delivery of health and social care.

The successful provision of health and social care is one of the greatest challenges today. Whether caused by expanding global population growth or increased life expectancy, the need to provide reassuring, consistent and cost-effective health and social care will only grow in its magnitude and complexity.

The health and social care sector is not unique in its goal of striving to deliver a balance of quality, economic, social and environmental needs, ultimately aiming for excellence. Health and social care excellence is driven by the need to provide confidence in the delivery of a competent service to patients, families, regulators and commissioners.

Accreditation within the health and social care sector supports this assurance. It provides an essential tool for healthcare providers to demonstrate that they have undergone a rigorous process to ensure that their patients consistently receive high quality services delivered by competent staff working in safe environments.

What are the issues?

- **Is the provision of health and social care safe, for patients and staff?**
- **Just how accurate and reliable are the outcomes or test results?**
- **Are there measures in place to prevent misdiagnosis?**
- **What proof is there that confidential information is handled appropriately and remains confidential?**
- **Are any complaints taken seriously and acted upon?**
- **Is high quality, cost effective care achievable?**
- **What reassurance is there that the correct patient care pathway is being followed?**



What is the role of accreditation?

Conducted by an authoritative body against nationally and internationally recognised standards, accreditation is the independent and impartial evaluation of an organisations competence in relation to specific activities or services.

The primary purpose of health and social care accreditation is to ensure that users of the service receive a consistent high level of care, with quality patient outcomes at its core.

Accreditation creates an essential framework for health and social care providers to improve their processes and environment, which stimulates continuous quality improvement to the patient experience, and results in increased confidence in the outcomes.

Accreditation bodies, which have been evaluated by peers as competent, sign arrangements that enhance the acceptance of accreditation of these services.

Organisations linked to the IAF MLA and ILAC MRA systems demonstrate a commitment to excellence, efficiency and assurance in the provision of health and social care, reinforcing the mutual international recognition of services.

ISO 13485 – Medical Device Certification

ISO 13485 is the world's most recognised medical device standard and ensures excellence in the provision of medical devices. The primary objective of this standard is to facilitate harmonised medical device regulatory requirements by providing an effective solution to meet the comprehensive requirements for a quality management system (QMS).

ISO 13485 provides a practical foundation for manufacturers to address regulations and responsibilities, as well as demonstrating a commitment to the safety and quality of medical devices.

Accredited certification is used to assess conformity of medical devices against this standard.



What benefit does accreditation provide?

For Regulators

Ultimately, the regulators role is to ensure that all health and social care providers deliver safe, effective, compassionate and high quality care. Accreditation assures regulators that they can rely on providers to verify compliance with their set policy requirements. It helps regulators to manage risk, as they are able to target their inspections more reliably and effectively, whilst delivering cost savings.

Internationally, accreditation provides health and social care regulators with a robust and credible framework to accept outcomes with an equivalent level of confidence as if they had been carried out in the local economy.

Ultimately, accreditation provides regulators with a reliable monitoring tool to support the continuous improvement of all health and social care services.

ISO 15189 – Medical Laboratory Accreditation

Supplying diagnostic results for care providers, medical laboratory services play a pivotal role in; ensuring that patients receive the most pertinent treatment and care. It is imperative that medical laboratories can effectively meet the needs of all patients and clinical personnel.

Medical Laboratories are accredited against the requirements of ISO 15189, which details the requirements for quality and competence within medical laboratories.

Accreditation against the global standard ISO 15189, allows medical laboratories to demonstrate, through a rigorous process, the technical competence of that laboratory to all stakeholders including health care providers. ISO 15189 is also used to assess mortuaries and post-mortem facilities.

Point of Care Testing

Point of Care Testing (POCT) is often carried out at a patient's bedside to allow results to be available sooner and therefore, is outside of the controlled and regulated environment of a medical laboratory.

As the outcome can trigger immediate decisions about a patient's care, accreditation means that patients can trust that the results are reliable, and should any decisions be made as a direct consequence of testing, they can be assured that they are still following the correct patient care pathway.

POCT services are accredited against the requirements of ISO 22870, which is intended to be used in conjunction with ISO 15189 accreditation.



What benefit does accreditation provide?

For Health and Social Care Providers

Accreditation provides objective proof that the service operates competently and safely, is patient focused and delivers outcomes that can be relied upon. Accreditation supports continuous improvement which can boost morale, deliver cost savings and, in some cases, can act as a leverage for change. Accreditation provides market differentiation and therefore, may result in an increase of

commissioned services and advantages during any tender process.

Accreditation is gaining increasing recognition from regulators, and so providers can demonstrate compliance through accreditation. In some cases, this can result in reduced audits.

Traceability of Results via Medical Reference Materials

Accurate measurements are vitally important as they will often influence the patient pathway. A crucial element of providing accurate measurements is reliable reference materials.

ISO Guide 34 sets out the management system requirements, in accordance with which reference materials should be produced. It ensures that reference material providers are competent to manufacture their products to a given quality, and that the measurement procedures are controlled, allowing laboratories to verify their ability to measure accurately.

In addition, the accuracy and traceability of some measurements in medical laboratories is demonstrated via the use of ISO 15195 an international standard dedicated to medical reference measurement laboratories.

Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation

Diagnostic imaging services are normally assessed against nationally recognised standards which reflect the differing service delivery context in each country.

All accreditation schemes cover the various modalities of imaging, such as MRI, Ultrasound and CT scans and involve a robust process of assessment. This results in the assurance of safe, high quality care with reliable outcomes that patients can trust.

Continuous monitoring and improvement forms part of this process, instilling further reassurance that the service is striving for excellence.



What benefit does accreditation provide?

For Commissioners and Referrers:

Accreditation is an essential tool for decision-making and risk management. Accreditation is a mark of quality that can be used to easily identify technically competent, safe, efficient, patient-focused services that meet all regulatory requirements. Accreditation supports commissioners and referrers in the delivery of effective purchasing, cost-efficiency, good governance and public confidence.

For Patients:

When using an accredited service, patients can be assured that they will receive the level of high quality care that they expect and can trust that the diagnostic outcomes are accurate. Whether selecting a residential care home or having tests carried out, accreditation allows patients to make an informed choice about their health and social care ensuring competence and added value.

Physiological Services

Physiological Science services are assessed against nationally recognised standards that reflect the differing service delivery context in each country.

Accreditation covers a number of diagnostic physiological science disciplines, all of which investigate the functioning of organ/body systems to diagnose abnormalities and subsequently, reduce the often disabling consequences to the patient.

The sole aim of accreditation is the on-going improvement of the quality of services, care and safety for patients undergoing physiological science service tests, examinations and procedures.

Accreditation provides physiological science services with a means to demonstrate to their patients that the service operates safely and competently and is committed to continuous improvement.

Residential Care Home inspection

Accredited inspection for residential care homes raises standards resulting in improved social care, and provides independent affirmation that the care provider is compliant with the rigorous standards used by the accredited inspection body.

Inspection bodies are assessed against the internationally recognized inspection standard ISO/IEC 17020 to carry out inspections of social care providers.

The inspections focus on competence, impartiality and performance capability to assure patients and their families of the high quality of care provided by residential care homes.



Closing Statement

The focus on delivering excellence within the health and social care sector is underpinned by accreditation. Accreditation supports and delivers the aim of consistent high quality care with reliable outcomes that patients can trust, and provides peace of mind that the service will meet expectations. The on-going work of the IAF and ILAC, as the established authorities to which accreditation bodies must comply, provides additional reassurance and confidence and conveys an international sign of quality and competence.

ISO 9001 & ISO/IEC 27001 Management System Certification of Medical Facilities

Accredited certification bodies, operating to global levels of assurance, may certify healthcare providers to ISO 9001 to continuously support quality or to ISO/IEC 27001, which gives patients confidence in those organisations handling their personal data.

ISO 9001 describes the requirements for quality management systems and is the world's most established quality framework. It is based on a number of quality management principles including a strong customer focus, the motivation and implication of top management, the process driven approach and continual improvement

ISO/IEC 27001 is the internationally recognised best practice framework for an information security management system, a vital element in the provision of health and social care. It provides a systematic approach to managing sensitive company information so that it remains secure. It includes people, processes and IT systems by applying a risk management process.

Accredited certification is used to assess conformity against these standards.

A growing number of case studies, independent research and supporting information from around the world, illustrating the value of accreditation in the health and social care sector, can be viewed on publicsectorassurance.org¹.

¹ Publicsectorassurance.org is a joint website set up by ISO, ILAC, IAF, IIOC and IEC to help the public sector learn about the benefits of using conformity assessment.



Further information

Major events, press campaigns, workshops and seminars will take place in conjunction with the celebration of World Accreditation Day in over 90 countries to raise awareness of the value that accreditation plays in supporting global trade. For further details, contact your local accreditation body.

Further information on the ILAC mutual recognition arrangement (MRA) and a list of Signatories is available on the ILAC website <http://ilac.org/ilac-mra-and-signatories/>

Further information on the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangements (MLA) and a list of Signatories is available on the IAF website http://www.iaf.nu//articles/IAF_MEMBERS_SIGNATORIES/4s.



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