

Position Statement

Human Resources Allocation for Medical Laboratories

The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) believes that effective Human Resource (HR) planning must include all healthcare system components. In order to integrate career and life expectations, a successful plan must consider educational achievements, employment opportunities, labour commitments, industry standards, immigration demands, regulatory stipulations, societal influences, political climate, economic restrictions, and patient outcomes. A collective and consolidated planning effort is required among governments (federal, provincial, and territorial), healthcare employers, and professional groups to maintain and support the complex, interconnected human resource systems in medical laboratories.

CSMLS supports and encourages the implementation of a common framework for human resource planning in the health sector. This framework must include three fundamental concepts: that health services focus on engaging patients/clients/stakeholders; that health system concerns are at the forefront of any government or professional organization's mandates and responsibilities; and that retention strategies are included to support any human resource changes in the workplace.

Medical laboratories must include CSMLS-certified medical laboratory professionals as part of the medical laboratory team. These CSMLS professionals shall perform processes in the pre-analytical, analytical, and post-analytical phases within their respective Standards of Practice. In order to ensure accurate laboratory results and a safe work environment, human resource allocation must appropriately correlate to the diversity of the testing menu and the complexity of the testing platform.

Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLTs) and Medical Laboratory Assistants (MLAs) play a vital role in providing laboratory services in Canada. They function as high-level members of the multidisciplinary healthcare team. They display a variety of broad-based skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication. Their work is essential to successfully diagnosing illness, treating disease, and maintaining overall public health and patient wellness. MLTs possess advanced and diverse technical abilities that enable them to perform and interpret complex laboratory procedures. An MLA's expertise relates primarily to the pre-analytical phase of laboratory testing, including specimen collection, specimen preparation, and data entry.

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Leadership is an important element of effective collaboration. CSMLS-certified laboratory professionals are capable of providing strong, cohesive leadership and advocate for the profession. They are key stakeholders in laboratory HR planning. Their input is vital to breaking down funding barriers and ensuring government support for infrastructure, staffing allocation, interprofessional education (including mentoring programs), scientific research, and informed decision-making.

The CSMLS believes that all healthcare organizations and/or employers in Canada who are engaged in health human resource planning should consider the following:

1. Needs-Based Planning

Plans should recognize that demographic, epidemiological, cultural, and geographic factors influence current and emerging healthcare resource needs.

2. Multidisciplinary Collaboration

To serve their patients' best interests and personal welfare, health professionals should communicate effectively, coordinate efforts cooperatively, and work together to strengthen the entire healthcare team. Promoting interdisciplinary, pan-professional education, and funding models help support interprofessional collaboration and improve the quality of patient care.

3. The Health Workforce is a National Resource

Governments at all levels must support national mobility for Canadian healthcare professionals to enable relocation within and between provinces and territories.

4. Self-Sufficiency

In order to achieve greater self-sufficiency, Canada should develop improved medium and long-term human resource projection models. In addition to establishing sufficient enrollment opportunities for Canadians wishing to enter into health sciences education programs, we must also effectively integrate individuals wanting to return to practice and international graduates who are permanent residents/citizens of Canada aspiring to gain employment in healthcare careers. To do so, stakeholders must further develop the infrastructure to support education programs, professional development, refresher courses, novel education practices, and bridging programs. Clinical training is an important consideration in HR planning; there must always be sufficient opportunities for clinical placements for prospective trainees to ensure successful succession planning.

5. The Global Environment

The ability to rapidly exchange information worldwide and mutual qualification recognition among organizations has contributed to the globalization of healthcare professions. While maintaining Canada's high-quality education and teaching standards, we should consider formal agreements between the Canadian government and other countries to improve and assist foreign recruitment into the medical

laboratory profession.

6. Policy Planning and Decision-Making Processes

Health HR policy planning and decision-making should include representation from all stakeholders, including governments, regional health authorities, educational institutions, regulators, and clinicians.

7. Competitive Human Resources Policies

HR policies should take comprehensive and creative approaches to develop work environments that continuously attract, engage, and retain employees.

8. Healthy and Safe Workplaces

To ensure the best possible patient outcomes, healthcare employers should develop procedures that achieve safe, healthy workplaces and enact policies that ensure employee support. Strategies to effectively assist employees should include: following best practices, providing appropriate educational opportunities, promoting teamwork, observing safe work practices, maintaining manageable workload levels, and creating high-quality work-life environments.

9. Work-Life Balance (Personal versus Professional)

Healthcare employers should develop a strategic plan to balance their employees' professional commitments and personal lives. The plan should factor work-life balance into the needs-based planning component, including concepts like fatigue management, capacity versus demand, and promoting positive mental health in the workplace.

The CSMLS believes that all health care organizations and/or employers in Canada must consider the following position statements and Standards of Practice when planning Human Resource allocation:

CSMLS Standards of Practice – MLT

CSMLS Standards of Practice – MLA

CSMLS Position Statements:

- CSMLS Certification and Entry-Level Requirements for Medical Laboratory Assistants
- CSMLS Certification and Entry-Level Requirements for Medical Laboratory Technologists
- Quality Work-Life Environments for Medical Laboratory Professionals
- Medical Laboratory Professionals: Integral for Patient Safety
- Diversity
- Maintenance of Competence

References:

Government of Canada, Occupational Health and Safety website (n.d.), retrieved from

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/occup-travail/work-travail/index.-eng.php>