

## 12-4: Training and continuing education

### Definitions

**Training** is a process to provide and develop knowledge, skills, and behaviours to meet requirements. In this context, training is linked to the job description and competency assessment, and addresses identified gaps in specific tasks to be performed by the employee. Competency should be reassessed after any job-specific training.

**Retraining** is required when competency assessment reveals the need for improving an employee's knowledge and skills.

**Cross-training** provides an opportunity for staff to acquire skills outside their own discipline. This allows for flexibility in shifting or reassigning personnel whenever needed; this may occur in crisis situations or with absences of staff due to illness or vacation.

**Continuing education** is an educational programme that brings employees up-to-date in a particular area of knowledge or skills. Since laboratory medicine is constantly changing, keeping current takes effort on the part of both employee and management.

### Rationale

Reasons for training and continuing education are to:

- achieve quality practices in the laboratory and produce accurate, reliable and timely test results;
- help staff achieve personal career goals;
- improve the organization's capabilities and achievement of quality objectives.

In laboratory medicine, new testing methodologies and instruments are continuously introduced to the marketplace that could have implications for laboratory testing and improved patient care.

### Methods

When planning a training or continuing education activity, consider:

- identification of training needs
- design of training
- provision of training
- evaluation of training results.

Activities can often be organized at low cost, for example:

- starting a journal club;
- starting case study discussion groups;
- watching videotapes and DVDs;
- researching a topic and presenting findings to colleagues;
- using interactive self-study programmes, including e-learning freeware or printed courses;
- collecting and maintaining a set of teaching slides (e.g. haematology and parasitology).



## Resources

**Local resources**—When organizing internal continuing education programmes, local resources available from the health care community should be considered. Some of these resources include:

- quality assurance committee
- clinicians
- nurses
- pathologists
- infection control personnel
- epidemiologists or surveillance officers
- external assessors.

Each of these groups may offer specialized knowledge and experience they can share with laboratory staff. They can be invited to give lectures, lead discussions and exchange information.

**External resources**—External continuing education programmes can also be presented by topic experts, such as those associated with:

- proficiency testing services
- manufacturers
- scientific societies
- World Health Organization
- United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- nongovernmental organizations.