Global Impact of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief From the Laboratory Perspective

Cathy Robinson, MLS(ASCP)C, Wendy Arneson, MS, MLS(ASCP)CM
ASCP Institute for Global Outreach, Chicago, IL

PEPFAR began in 2003 with the goal of decreasing HIV/AIDS in countries with high infectivity rates. Under the PEPFAR program, administered through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the ASCP Institute for Global Outreach was funded and tasked to assist laboratories to increase their capacity and enhance sustainability by improving accuracy and reliability of test results. The ASCP focused on improving laboratory procedures and staff competencies and filling gaps in educational programs. After 9 years, has funding allocated to ASCP resulted in laboratory improvements and better health care? Following initial assessments, the ASCP developed training programs and workshops to target identified gaps and deficiencies and to meet international accreditation guidelines. Pretests and posttests were used to measure laboratory staff proficiencies, while baseline and postactivity assessments measured progress toward earning international accreditation. The ASCP collected data from laboratories and schools it worked with. The areas of accreditation, certification, automated equipment use, curriculum improvements, training and safety, supply chain management, laboratory operations, continuing education, and communication were measured to determine baseline and current status. For the past 9 years, ASCP Global Outreach teams have worked with more than 100 laboratories, colleges, universities, and training centers in 23 countries. Through PEPFAR funding, the laboratories and schools involved with ASCP progressed from essentially no meaningful accreditation score to scores now approaching international accreditation standards. Schools have added modern technology theory and application, computer skills, molecular diagnostics, and more to their curricula in addition to enhancing the teaching styles and methods of their faculty. The outcomes for students include increased competencies and knowledge when they graduate, which are now required for entry level MLT and MLS laboratory positions. The challenges were many, and many remain, but this study clearly shows that the funding contracted to ASCP improved laboratory services and benefited global health care.

Category:
Global Pathology