

Midwest Hospital Completes Successful CAP Inspection with Thorough Preparation and Planning



A health system that has provided quality healthcare for over 150 years with locations throughout the Midwest, today continues to provide nationally recognized care with numerous awards, certifications, and recognitions. One success was turning around CAP inspection readiness at one of its hospitals.

Client Profile

Midwest Health System

Overview

- Unfilled lab manager position
- Upcoming CAP inspection

Accumen Products

- Interim lab leaders
- Accreditation Readiness Assessment



2 interim lab leaders



2 mock CAP inspections

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CAP stands for the College of American Pathologists. Formed in 1946 and establishing its accreditation program in 1961, CAP focuses on quality and is one of the most prestigious accreditation bodies.

In search of a lab leader

In May of 2022, this location was struggling with two challenges – unfilled lab manager and supervisor positions, and an upcoming CAP inspection. The hospital struggled to replace these leadership roles, possibly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, many lab leaders left the profession due to burnout, making it hard to fill those positions. The Human Resources department had posted the lab manager and supervisor positions but were not receiving the quality of applicants needed for the roles. In addition, without strong and stable lab leadership, the lab was continuing to experience high turnover rates, along with concerns that quality could begin to suffer.

At the client's request, Accumen reached out to its pool of experienced lab leaders. In this process, Accumen does extensive vetting and only sources candidates that are highly experienced, knowledgeable, and have displayed a history of effective lab leadership. As a result, the hospital gained two interim leaders through Accumen. The first interim lab manager committed to a three-month contract, starting in June 2022. After three months, when the location was still unable to recruit a long-term candidate, another interim lab manager was found and committed to three months - providing six months of leadership while the search continued.

Preparing for the CAP inspection

Lab management is critically important for several reasons, but one high priority reason for this lab was its upcoming CAP inspection window in the fall of 2022.

CAP stands for the College of American Pathologists. Formed in 1946 and establishing its accreditation program in 1961, CAP focuses on quality and is one of the most prestigious accreditation bodies. If a lab is CAP-accredited, it is seen as operating within strict quality standards that were tested for clinical diagnostic purposes.

CAP inspections are held every two years. In the off-year, labs must complete a self-inspection to hold themselves to a high standard of quality and safety. CAP also considers several additional factors, including environmental cleanliness and the safety of the laboratorians, in their efforts to support patient care.

Due diligence to ensure success

Carrie Livesay, a Director in Lab Excellence at Accumen, has performed many CAP inspections and has 40 years of lab experience. She planned a mock inspection in preparation for the upcoming CAP inspection. This functions just like an actual CAP inspection; however, it is for internal planning purposes only.

Carrie explains the benefit of an outside party to complete mock inspections, "Teams are often caught up in daily tasks or just don't know where to begin. We can prioritize the tasks for them, along with offering comprehensive and continuous support. We can also provide subject matter expertise and project planning - we want to help them be successful." Carrie worked with the lab team to complete two mock inspections in preparation for the CAP inspection. The first one was conducted in June 2022, the same week the first interim lab manager started. It resulted in approximately 40 deficiencies which the lab team began addressing immediately.

Mock CAP inspection findings cut in half



Addressing the findings

The lab worked quickly and diligently to correct the findings - addressing some errors immediately and assigning lab team members to dig into others. “While negative findings are a concern, internally they offer lab staff the opportunity to correct them and raise their standard,” shares Celena Blackwood, another Director in Lab Excellence at Accumen who has also performed many CAP inspections.

The team also reviewed the mock inspection report and Accumen-provided crosswalk. The crosswalk included identification of the CAP standards for compliance, requirements for each standard, current state observations and findings, and recommendations for short-term and long-term corrective actions. The crosswalk details and outline were provided to the client in Excel format to be used as a working document as they initiated corrective actions. This also provides the client with a way to track follow-up, assign responsible parties, due dates, status of each action, and link to evidence of compliance. The interim lab manager was also able to utilize the crosswalk to move project plans forward and provide guidance along the way.

“The mock inspection helped us to get a better understanding of what we were missing, be better organized in approaching deficiencies while facing staffing issues, get advice on which format to use when doing our self-inspection in the future, and enable our new leads to become familiar with CAP checklists and how to approach them,” stated the site’s Laboratory Medical Director.

The second mock inspection was conducted in September 2022, and the process continued to really help the team. Many leads and staff members were new and had not been actively part of a CAP inspection in the past. They stated that the practice session was incredibly helpful, enabling them to learn and share best practices. This process is important to support the best patient care. During the second mock inspection, the findings were cut in half compared to the first assessment, as the lab team had made significant progress.

Strong results and strong leadership

The official CAP inspection was conducted in November, within the window as planned. But this time, the lab team was prepared and ready. They successfully passed, and the team is certain this is due to both their efforts as well as the opportunities revealed in the two mock inspections. As a result of this success, another location within the health system even asked Accumen to complete the same process for its lab, which they did.

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Carrie Livesay, Director in Lab Excellence, Accumen

With the CAP inspection complete and successful, the hospital had the other goal to achieve – finding a permanent lab manager and a lab supervisor. Eventually a department manager from another of the health system’s larger sites took on the role of manager and turned out to be a great fit. In addition, a long-term lab staff member and lead was offered the role of supervisor. During the six months of interim leadership, this person was fostered, challenged, and given the opportunity to shine. Already a strong lead with attention to detail, she thoroughly supported the CAP process and was able to successfully transition to supervisor.

Learn more about mock CAP inspections and interim lab leaders

Your laboratory is a strategic asset to your overall health system. That’s why it is vitally important to ensure that lab staff are supported as well as following all accreditation requirements. Health systems may never know true opportunities or successes without thorough assessment by an unbiased third party.

Accumen can provide the experts needed to assess lab inspection readiness or gaps. In addition, Accumen can also provide expert guidance in the form of an interim leader for lab operations, to enable teams to achieve successful results.

Contact us at info@accumen.com to learn more.