

The voice of Corporate Members shined at the 2022 IFCC Industry Forum: advancing excellence in laboratory medicine for better healthcare worldwide

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Frank Vitzthum, Managing Director and Vice President Pre-Development & Advanced Technologies Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics Products GmbH



(L-R) Moderators: Joe Passarelli (Roche) and Tricia Ravalico (Abbott)

Discussants: Anne Skurup (Radiometer Medical), Frank Vitzthum (Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics Products GmbH), Els Melis (QuidelOrtho) and Brendan Meyer (Becton Dickinson Life Sciences)

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For over 50 years, corporate members have been influential in supporting the mission of the IFCC. Until recent years, however, the voice of corporate members were often dwarfed or unheard. This paradigm has changed substantially with the development of the IFCC Task Force of Corporate Members (TF-CM) which has been thriving since its inception 5 years ago.

Initially led by **Joe Passarelli**, Roche Diagnostics, the TF-CM tackled early topics of joint corporate interest. Upon his subsequent transition to serve on the IFCC Executive Board, his position as chair of the Task Force was replaced by **Tricia Ravalico** from Abbott. Collectively and with the support of the IFCC, Joe and Tricia had led multiple industry-workshops including their recent success in Brussels at the IFCC General Conference.

With special thanks to Khosrow Adeli for the invitation, Joe and Tricia hosted an educational forum that spanned 4 brilliant speakers from industry including **Anne Skurup**, Senior Medical Advisor at Radiometer Medical, **Dr. Frank Vitzthum**, Managing Director and Vice President Pre-Development & Advanced Technologies Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics Products GmbH, **Els Melis**, EMEA Senior Marketing Manager, QuidelOrtho, Belgium, and **Dr Brendan Meyer**, Associate Director, Medical Affairs EMEA, Integrated Diagnostic Solutions, Becton Dickinson Life Sciences.


Their forum tackled emerging trends both pre and post COVID, highlighted the opportunities and challenges associated with the enhanced regulatory demands for clinical studies and included best practices associated with industry partnerships. A more detailed summary from each talk is summarized below with call to action for all teams, committees and/or interested colleagues to leverage the IFCC TF-CM as a collective industry voice that can enhance triple wins for the IFCC, companies and the patients we all serve.

The title of the first presentation (Anne Skurup) was “**Meeting the Demand for Clinical Studies: A Joint Effort for IFCC and IVD Industry**,” was based on the observation that the need for clinical studies in the in-use environment in hospitals required for regulatory approval has increased. The complexity regarding documentation and execution of associated studies is also on the rise. At the same time, challenges exist due a world-wide lack of health care staff and post Covid effects. Consequences include longer times to market for new and innovative products, despite the potential to improve patient care and reduce workloads.

During the Industry Forum, live poll results amongst representatives from the audience indicated a strong interest in engagement in future clinical studies. Excitingly, this translates to the triple win mentioned earlier in that safe and effective IVD solutions become more readily available through partnerships enabled by the IFCC with the strength and insight to mitigate and/or solve some many of the current challenges that companies are challenged with, while also embracing the confidentiality associated with these needs. Long term, deepened collaborations can lead to faster release of new technology that not only meets current health care challenges but fosters additional benefits both within and outside off Laboratory Medicine. Opportunities in the near term include but are not limited to the potential establishment of an IFCC expert advice committee with a passion to support this valued initiative.

In the second presentation, “**Emerging Trends**”, Dr. Frank Vitzthum outlined transformational changes, like demographics, consumerism, etc. and how they drive current and emerging trends. There is still a growing need for in-vitro diagnostics. However, cost pressure forces us rightfully so to achieve more with less. At the same time, we must provide clinical value through new and improved assays as well as digitalization. Healthcare is becoming more and more digital combining information applying data management, algorithms, and clinical decision support including artificial intelligence to add significant clinical value. Intelligent machines will support precision decision making and eventually connected Intelligence will expand healthcare availability.

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In the third presentation, Els Melis commented on **“What Have We Learned from the COVID Experience?”** For almost 3 years, the COVID-19 pandemic put unprecedented pressure on society, people, hospitals, and healthcare systems, causing over 6.5 million deaths worldwide. Her presentation argued that everyone should reflect on the impact which the COVID pandemic has had, take learnings, and assure a better preparedness for the future.

Looking at the Healthcare System, the pandemic heavily disrupted access to early detection, screening, diagnosis, care, and treatment for people living with acute and chronic non-COVID related diseases. This dramatically impacted their day-to-day life, leading to a worsening of their conditions and often increased mortality. It is important to build back better and more resilient healthcare systems, with screening programs which support risk stratification and as such enable improved access to early screening and diagnosis.

As an Industry, we learned that it is possible to go fast when the world health is at stake. Crisis creates natural alignment and assay development times, which typically take 2-3 years, could be achieved in as little as a few weeks. We observed collaboration between governments and regions. Rapid publication of new insights enabled continuous progression and learnings.

From the laboratory’s perspective, the staffing and supply shortages have emphasized the need for mitigation plans to enable rapid response, rapid addition of capacity, accelerated on-boarding of new vendors for critical supplies and updated processes to implement new tests.

The pandemic also demonstrated a lot of flexibility from the regulatory bodies. Emergency authorizations eliminated normal burdens and enabled faster development and product releases. However, they were facing resource issues too as they needed to rapidly expand capability to review many more filings than ever before. Should regulatory bodies create a group of additional reviewers as a contingency plan?

The crisis has definitely put diagnostics in a positive light. As we are adjusting to the new normal, we need to continue striving for efficient and agile processes to improve patient outcomes and to ensure no one is left behind in case of future health emergencies.

Brendan Meyer discussed the opportunities and challenges of **“IFCC Partnership with the IVD Industry”**. Together with the ongoing sponsorship of IFCC activities, such as Divisional work, scholarships, awards and conferences, there are clear examples where IVD partnerships are supporting best-practice changes in clinical laboratory practice. While prerequisites such as compliance requirements and long-term budgeting may be challenging, these can be overcome through planning and change management. The IVD industry looks forward to continuing and growing partnerships.

Tricia Ravalico closed the session with a spotlight on the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence award program, a global award for all healthcare teams who have achieved measurably better healthcare performance through teamwork and avant-garde use of insights from laboratory medicine. His award program was featured as a best practice among industry with multiple IFCC leaders as award winners over the past 4 years. Learn more about the UNIVANTS awards and/or their associated best practices at www.UnivantsHCE.com.

In summary, the IVD industry is active and excited to advance the mission of the IFCC and Laboratory Medicine. For any IFCC team and/or committees who is seeking further insight about the IVD industry, please leverage the IFCC Task Force of Corporate Members as supportive partners in your respective efforts. We are in this together and excited for the future.

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Joe Passarelli (Roche), Anne Skurup (Radiometer Medical), Brendan Meyer (Becton Dickinson Life Sciences), Tricia Ravalico (Abbott), Els Melis (QuidelOrtho) and Frank Vitzthum (Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics Products GmbH)