

Relocation of Clinical Laboratories: Maintaining Full Operations and Ensuring Business Continuity

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1. BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

Prior to April 2013, Singapore General Hospital (SGH)'s Pathology and Haematology clinical laboratories were operating from 6 different locations on Outram Campus to cope with service demands. With facilities over 50 years old, plans were made to consolidate clinical laboratory services in a greenfield building (Academia) which would allow sharing of critical resources. Ten clinical laboratories and the Pathology Administrative Office were challenged to relocate while maintaining full operations including 24-hour core laboratory services, in line with the institution's mission to deliver quality care to patients.



2. METHODOLOGY / APPROACH

Being pioneers in Singapore to relocate multiple large service laboratories (including 2 BSL3 laboratories) and mindful that there should be no service downtime, stakeholders were engaged 2 years in advance.



Several business continuity strategies and plans were established early, including:

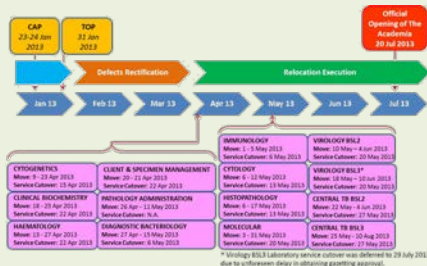
1 Tapping on overseas healthcare institutions' experiences with relocating laboratories

Two study visits were made to 7 healthcare institutions in Korea and Taiwan to observe good laboratory practices and learn from their experience with relocating laboratories.



2 Scheduling relocation dates during non-operational or off-peak hours

The relocation timeline was set and communicated early, with most relocation dates scheduled on weekends, after office hours and on public holidays to minimise potential service disruptions.



3 Mapping of equipment to services to develop comprehensive relocation plans

4 Adopting a phased approach to maintain "duplicate" service lines throughout the relocation

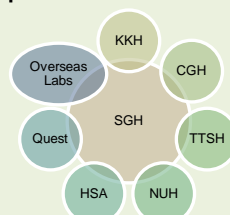
Laboratories were moved in phases to ensure that equipment was shifted, set up and stabilised at the new facility before shutting down duplicate equipment at the old building.

5 Arranging for additional equipment to be loaned for the relocation period

6 Ensuring full manpower to support operations during the relocation

All laboratory staff had to adhere to a black-out leave period two weeks before and after each laboratory was due to shift to ensure full support for relocation activities and that normal operations could be maintained throughout.

7 Inking of service agreements with other organisations' laboratories to allow outsourcing of critical services in the event of unexpected extended downtime



8 Dry runs to fine-tune and familiarise staff with relocation workflow, packing methodology, planned routes and emergency response plans

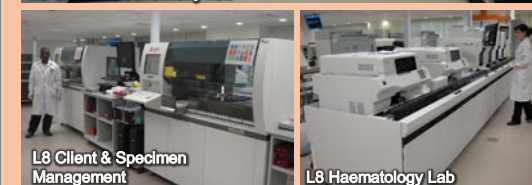


9 Stress testing using dummy specimens to ensure enhanced specimen transportation systems were functioning at optimum levels



3. RESULTS

Relocation of clinical laboratories to Academia spanned from April to August 2013 and successfully reunited 10 laboratories under one roof without service disruptions. Staff settled in quickly and adapted well to their new working environments. Clinical laboratories, research laboratories and clinical department offices are now located in close proximity within the Academia, creating more opportunities for collaboration and integration of clinical services.



4. CONCLUSION

The smooth and uneventful transition to the new premises was attributed to detailed and advanced planning, full support from senior management and most importantly, the hard work and combined efforts of the project team, laboratory staff and several other departments and colleagues.