

Ortho uses French connection to diagnose labs worldwide

Edited by Carren Bersch, Editor

This month, *MLO* is pleased to introduce to its International Corner Betsy Hanna, vice president of EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa), and Troy Taylor, vice president, Worldwide Customer Technical Service, both headquartered at Ortho Clinical Diagnostics, in Raritan, NJ. Ms. Hanna and Mr. Taylor answer several questions about the company's global activities.

MLO: While many organizations embrace the concept of “global” as a relatively new way of doing business, it appears that Ortho Clinical Diagnostics (OCD) perhaps added more “global” flair to its operations as it announced the launch of its Remote Monitoring Center in Strasbourg, serving 18 countries. Obviously, OCD's European Support Center (ESC) was operating for some 20 years in Strasbourg before this important launch. Is the RMC the only “arm” of the organization that moved from America to Europe, with plans to move to the Asia-Pacific region, and other venues overseas?

Taylor: Our business has always been global in nature. The technical support operation evolved from a loose collection of regional functions into a tight-knit global operation, so now we use state-of-the-art technology with common systems, processes, and standards to connect systems that enhance the experience of our customers around the world. One example of this is the global Remote Monitoring Center, which is a network of high-tech centers in the United States (Rochester, NY) and Europe (Strasbourg, France), that provides 24/7 proactive monitoring of the worldwide installed base of instruments. Additionally, we have also maintained ongoing operations in our state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Wales, which in 2009 moved into a new location in Pencoed.

MLO: Was the Strasbourg Remote Monitoring Center launch the initiation of the concept of “360° support” for customers around the world? Or was this an addition to other operations that were already functioning in France and other countries?

Taylor: The Remote Monitoring Center is the newest investment we have made, in addition to the Call Center and Field Engineering service that Ortho Clinical Diagnostics deploys as standard resources to perform service work for customers. We believe in the value of getting services completed in the quickest possible way, so we are investing in the technology as a means of enhancing our value to our customers' operations.

MLO: How does OCD impact all things “clinical laboratory,” aside from this new Remote Monitoring Center?

Hanna: We are committed to providing customers with products, services, and process solutions to make labs more

efficient in delivering the quality test results that doctors and patients need. For instance, we have released 120 assays available on the VITROS 5600 Integrated and the VITROS 3600 Immunodiagnostic Systems. The VITROS assay menu covers 90% of the top 100 assays and 99% of laboratory test volume, with numerous other assays in development.

MLO: So far, what feedback are you receiving from customers in terms of the performance of the new center in Strasbourg and how the service impacts the day-to-day operations of their clinical labs?

One of the many benefits of the Remote Monitoring Center Strasbourg facility is that it allows customers to connect with technical support specialists in eight languages — English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, and Polish.

Taylor: The feedback has been overwhelming positive, not only in terms of what we have achieved, but the possibilities that customers had not previously imagined. As a recent example, an alert from a VITROS Instrument in Europe showed a system operating at a higher temperature than normal. By comparing temperature readings inside and outside the instrument, our remote technical support staff concluded that blocked ventilation may be the culprit. A call to the laboratory revealed that the instrument was pushed too close to the wall, and the problem was quickly solved by having the laboratory technician move it farther away. This quick analysis and resolution not only minimized potential downtime, but saved the customer potential field-service costs.

MLO: If OCD operates in developing countries, are there perhaps one or two products used more frequently than those used in Europe or in America?

Hanna: Our clinical lab business growth has been very high in Mexico, Brazil, and India. Furthermore, products used in developing countries tend to be the smaller, simpler instruments like our DT60 desktop instrument, VITROS 350, and ECiQ. An added benefit of VITROS chemistry technology is the



Betsy Hanna



Troy Taylor

MicroSlide — an entire integrated test environment on a thin piece of film. Layered dry-slide technology enables separate reaction domains, so each step can be optimized to provide excellent precision and accuracy. This technology provides high-quality results in diverse patient settings, reduces costs, and offers convenience, especially for smaller labs that may not have access to water or drains. Through investments in high-impact medical tests, as well as other services and process solutions, we aim to enable diagnostics to take on an even more important role in predicting disease and reducing the burden of chronic illnesses.

MLO: Does OCD recognize any unmet needs or demands for totally different types of products in different countries (e.g., more HIV/AIDS tests are used perhaps in African countries than in European countries)?

Hanna: As we continue to invest to develop our assay portfolio, we assess unmet needs in all parts of the world. Our portfolio under development today includes specialized infectious-disease tests for some developing countries, as well as other tests that are specific to a particular market or geography. We are dedicated to investing significant resources to continuously improve our products and develop solutions to address unmet medical needs. We offer a complete infectious-disease testing menu in the U.S., including Anti-HIV 1+2 and rubella, in addition to a comprehensive menu of routine assays that can be run on a single platform. Recently, we received U.S. FDA approval of the VITROS Anti-HIV 1+2 Assay for use on the VITROS 5600 Integrated and VITROS 3600 Immunodiagnostic Systems. This is the first diagnostic assay approved for an integrated system in the United States, allowing laboratories to run HIV and other routine tests on a single, consolidated testing platform.

MLO: Taken together, what areas of opportunity or focus are of the most critical importance to OCD?

Hanna: As a provider of high-quality, in vitro diagnostic products, we are focused on developing tools to help give patients a better quality of life at every point of care. Serving the transfusion medicine community, Ortho Clinical Diagnostics is the leading provider of donor screening and blood grouping and typing products. For example, we recently launched the FETALSCREEN II Fetal Maternal Hemorrhage Screening Test (in the U.S.), which aids in the detection, prevention and management of Hemolytic Disease of the Newborn, or HDN, a serious autoimmune disease caused by incompatibility between the mother's and baby's blood.

MLO: In what ways does OCD provide additional support for medical laboratories in those countries where its products are used?

Taylor: The 24-hour Remote Monitoring Center is designed to predict certain problems before they interrupt a laboratory's ability to deliver high quality test results to doctors and patients. With this service, technical support specialists and engineers monitor performance, diagnose issues remotely, and when required, schedule service at the customer's convenience, allowing laboratories to optimize instrument uptime. Additionally, our ValuMetrix Consulting Service helps clinical labs maximize their effectiveness through benchmarking, optimization processes and healthcare consulting services to achieve operational improvements, including increased

capacity, elimination of waste and improved quality. Using a systematic approach to quality and operational process improvement, ValuMetrix services helps laboratories address several challenges including skilled labor shortages, budget reductions and increasing test volumes.

MLO: Does OCD use different marketing techniques for each region or for each country when it begins to distribute its products?

Hanna: While our marketing strategy and messages are the same around the world, we believe it is important to tailor our approach for delivering these messages in each market. Some recent examples include our use of mobile marketing units (e.g., demonstration trucks) in the U.S. and Japan where we take our new products to the customers' site. In Europe, we bring customers and potential customers together in our manufacturing facility for a different type of demonstration there.

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MLO: What challenges did/does the organization face in developing its global business?

Hanna: Like many other global organizations, we are faced with the challenge of balancing local requirements and special needs with the broader, global "average" needs of customers. Another important area is that of regulatory requirements — the needs and requirements around the world are changing and it is becoming increasingly challenging to keep a broad portfolio in compliance with all of the global requirements. The same rings true when launching new products.

MLO: We find it interesting that more than half of the service department employees at the Remote Monitoring Center Strasbourg facility are fluent in more than three languages — which are the top five languages spoken among these 150 employees?

Taylor: One of the many benefits of the Remote Monitoring Center Strasbourg facility is that it allows customers to connect with technical support specialists in eight languages — English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, and Polish. The top five languages spoken are English, French, Italian, Spanish, and German.

MLO: Of all the details that one must confront in mastering global outreach, what are the "Top 3" suggestions you would give a newly minted OCD employee who was pursuing the global arm of the business — and would multiple language fluency be among those?

Hanna: 1) Be passionate about the IVD industry, and possess knowledge of the global diagnostic and clinical laboratory landscape. 2) Be fluent in at least one foreign language, including fluency in up three native languages of neighboring countries (e.g., an employee pursuing an opportunity in Spain may also want to become fluent in French and Portuguese). 3) Get out into the marketplace — wherever you are in the world. See our customers face-to-face and bring that perspective back to the company.

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MLO: Another aspect of OCD's "360°" support is the ValuMetrix Consulting Service, which helps clinical laboratories maximize their effectiveness through a variety of processes, such as benchmarking, increased capacity, and elimination of waste. Can you explain how modern clinical laboratories would benefit from making similar operational improvements?

Hanna: Using this model, clinical labs can maximize their effectiveness, refine internal processes, and ensure they are taking positive steps toward continuing to deliver quality results physicians and patients need. By working from the "inside-out," we mastered the principles of LEAN manufacturing internally by focusing on their supply chain, inventory, purchasing and the manufacturing floor. By investing in employees and existing assets, we are able to increase efficiency and productivity to provide customers with standardized, high-quality instruments faster.

While implementing new and different procedures may seem challenging at first, it is important to appreciate that these processes yield significant benefits for not only lab managers and employees, but also the facility and its patients.

MLO: What are some of the common obstacles you foresee labs facing if they were to implement similar changes?

Hanna: As with any operational change, lab managers and employees will need to become accustomed to new processes. Nonetheless, implementing these kinds of changes has been proven to show improvements in quality, lower costs and increase turnaround times, all through the elimination of waste. For example, an analysis of recent projects showed that labs were able to cut annual labor costs by as much as \$950,000. They were also able to implement quality initiatives to reduce rework and save more than \$270,000 each year, as well as reduce turnaround time by 54%.

MLO: Are there any reasons why a lab would be hesitant to do so?

Hanna: Yes, because most operational improvement initiatives require change. While implementing new and different procedures may seem challenging at first, it is important to appreciate that these processes yield significant benefits for not only lab managers and employees, but also the facility and its patients.

MLO: Based on your experience, what type of feedback is most common among lab employees when faced to make these changes?

Hanna: There are many factors to take into consideration. Generally, in the beginning we may encounter some resistance from employees. However, when working closely with our ValuMetrix Services Consulting group and laboratory leadership, employees feel a sense of accomplishment as they successfully learn to work more efficiently and effectively while embarking on their LEAN journey. Lasting success comes to those organizations that increase their success rate with change, shorten their change cycle time, encourage innovation, and actively create change. □