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Why did you choose to work in quality?

My career in quality started in 2000 when I was promoted to a position that included quality management duties: Officer-in-Charge of Laboratory Platoon in the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps at the 1st Field Hospital.

Quality management is often associated with medical laboratory science, so I had the dual role of fulfilling both managerial and technical requirements. I put my quality knowledge into practice when I prepared the medical laboratory for accreditation-related external audits.

I had to prepare the rapidly deployable medical laboratory for potential overseas operations and regular exercises, and I had to have quality plans for them all. I further developed my quality knowledge and skills while working for a private organisation where I was involved in conducting internal audits for the entire medical facility.

What are your main responsibilities, and how do you get results?

My current role as a learning and development consultant involves providing training solutions to organisations, mainly relating to ISO 9001 and ISO 15189. Teaching quality topics to laboratory personnel

in different countries has its challenges, including cultural factors. Different countries have different interpretations of the same international standard sub-clauses and their accreditation or certification bodies have different expectations.

While not actively teaching, I submit papers to peer-reviewed journals. I collaborate with authors from different countries, so I can learn other implementation techniques – countries including Armenia, Hong Kong, Japan, the Philippines, the UAE and the UK. This year alone, we published six papers. It is also a good learning routine for me to read the latest information relating to quality management.

What is the biggest achievement in your career to date?

I had the opportunity to provide services in Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands, and Indonesia during the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004. The overseas deployments were rarely safe and came with unexpected challenges. I used a wide range of medical laboratory science skills, including quality management, to fulfil our missions, which were both mentally and physically demanding. Our medical facilities were often fully armed to counter potential security threats – something that most civilian organisations do not need to consider.

Looking back, what would you do differently?

While it might have been easier to study management if I had not initially entered military service, I would not change the path I have taken. I really enjoyed my foundation years in the military and gained valuable experience.

In fact, thanks to my military deployment experience, I was able to secure employment in the South Pacific region. It seems everything was somehow roughly orchestrated.

What do you want to achieve in the next five years?

To stay current in areas that support my quality management practices, I would like to complete more professional fellowships, with organisations such as the CQI, the Australasian College of Health Services Management and the Institute of Biomedical Science.

What's your main piece of advice for others in their careers?

Work hard on your interpersonal skills in your professional practice, especially communication (active listening in particular) and teamwork (team reflexivity in particular).

The importance of these areas tends to be underestimated if you concentrate predominantly on the technical aspects.

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