Leading by example

Lance Little, Head of Roche Diagnostics Asia Pacific (APAC): "We need to have more young talent in diagnostics who want to help shape the future of healthcare. As the leader in diagnostics, it is also part of our role to invest in the development of those who want to embrace diagnostics as a career. The great collaboration between Roche and Auckland University of Technology is a best practice example that could become a role model for university and industry partnerships in other countries."

A good addition

With the recent acquisition of Seragon Pharmaceuticals, Roche now has exciting new opportunities with its portfolio of investigational medicines against breast cancer. Read more on page 10.

Summer on the road

LifeCycle Leader of etrolizumab, Malte Schütz, spent two weeks on his motorbike in Peru. He recounts his trip, full of joyful memories and dangerous pitfalls, on page 15.

Right on track

It was 20 years ago that Phelophepa began its journey through South Africa. The three-carriage eye clinic has now grown to become two hospital trains. Follow its journey on page 19.

'A perfect team'

With support from Roche Diagnostics, universities in the United States, Ireland and New Zealand are helping transform education in medical laboratory science.

Change is in the air. From the historic streets of Dublin to Phoenix in the Arizona desert and the fast-growing, multicultural city of Auckland, New Zealand, universities are focusing on biomedical diagnostics as an increasingly important field of study. And with support from Roche, these programs are able to tap into the expertise of the world’s leader in in vitro diagnostics.

"There is a growing need for skilled graduates able to innovate in this field," said Dr Aoife MacCormac, Biomedical Diagnostics Institute, Dublin City University (DCU). In September 2014, Arizona State University (ASU) and DCU welcomed students to the new International School of Biomedical Diagnostics, which will offer an international Master’s of Science (M.Sc.) in Biomedical Diagnostics. This program is at the cutting edge of establishing diagnostics as an independent discipline.

"The program will give students a broader exposure to biomedical diagnostics and help them take on more and greater responsibilities in their careers in the field," explained Prof. George Runger, Chair of the Department of Biomedical Informatics at ASU’s College of Health Solutions.

And the diagnostics industry will benefit from graduates who have a better understanding of how diagnostics are developed and their medical value, he added. Students enrolled in the program will follow a shared curriculum with courses offered by both universities. This "blended" learning approach features face-to-face elements, but students can also earn their degree completely online. They will also be involved in research or industry immersion programs, as well as internship experiences.

This first group of students in the new program is a mix of recent college graduates and people who are already working in the industry and want to further their careers.

Four core curriculum areas covering the biomedical diagnostics field are the anchors of the program. These include the technology of diagnostics, the science of diagnostics, the business of diagnostics and the application of diagnostics in healthcare decisions.

This unique collaboration between the two universities emerged from the need for academic institutions to keep pace with the rapidly evolving field of diagnostics. Roche Tissue
Diagnostics/Ventana Medical Systems is a key partner in the new program, according to ASU President Michael Crow.

“This is a tremendous example of how higher education is being transformed on a global basis through new technology-enabled collaborations,” he said. DCU President Brian MacCraith echoed this view.

“By combining the expertise and geographical context of ASU and DCU and by collaborating with industry partners such as Ventana, we will be in a strong position to provide programs that are always at the cutting edge,” President MacCraith said.

Ventana’s input helped the universities broaden the scope of the curriculum to meet current and future industry needs.

Linking academia and the workplace
And thousands of kilometers away in New Zealand, Auckland University of Technology (AUT) has inaugurated the AUT Roche Diagnostics Laboratory, which gives undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity for in-depth hands-on training with a new, purpose-built cobas laboratory on campus.

“When I started looking about a year ago into a partnership with the industry, I thought AUT and Roche Diagnostics would be a perfect team because we want to give the best to our students,” said Dr Fabrice Merien, Senior Lecturer in Immunology at AUT, at the lab’s official opening ceremonies. Dr Merien is also Director of the Roche Diagnostics Laboratory.

The university also believes the experience gained in the laboratory will help the students with clinical placement as they start and progress in their careers. They can tell potential employers which machines they already have worked with and which assays they have done. AUT is very active in research, and the instruments in the campus cobas lab will be used for research as well as training.

Lance Little, Head of Roche Diagnostics Asia Pacific (APAC), has been a strong supporter of the project and firmly believes that a leader in Diagnostics, “It is our role to invest in the development of talent who embrace medical laboratory science as a career.”

Lance added: “Diagnostics is the key to sustainable healthcare. Real-life hands-on experience in a modern laboratory ensures that the students here can become employees with valuable practical experience from day one. They will play an important role in shaping sustainable healthcare and improving peoples’ lives.”

Lara Hashimoto, General Manager, Roche Diagnostics New Zealand, has also been a staunch advocate of the project.

“At Roche Diagnostics, we are eager to be involved in helping the future medical laboratory science community be as well-equipped as possible when entering the workforce. We believe that the research that will be done in the new laboratory will be world-leading in the area of pathogen detection,” Lara said at the inauguration.

For Lance, the partnership between Roche and AUT also has deep personal meaning. He studied biomedical science at AUT and believes that learning from great professors, who came from within the industry, helped him build a strong foundation for his career, first in the hospital and then with the industry.

“I want those who decide to pursue a career in diagnostics to understand the value they bring to healthcare and the community and to become advocates for the industry,” he said. “The collaboration between Roche and AUT is a fantastic example of how we can achieve this.”

At the lab opening, AUT student Hau Qiao called the cobas modular system “amazing.”

“Other universities don’t have this facility,” added fellow AUT student King Ting Yik, who is studying for his bachelor of medical science degree. “This is preparing me for going into the actual lab.”

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Watch the YouTube video on the opening of the AUT Roche Diagnostics Laboratory:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNLO2G33h3o

Dublin City University’s collaboration with Ventana helps the university provide medical laboratory science education that meets current and future industry needs.

By collaborating with industry partners, we will be in a strong position to provide programs on the cutting edge.

Brian MacCraith

Graduates of the international master’s degree program at Arizona State University (ASU) will have a greater understanding of how diagnostics are developed, observes ASU Professor George Runger.