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Guest: Dr. Verónica Luzzi is the Medical Director of Research and Clinical Trials at the TriCore Research Institute of the TriCore Reference Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Randye Kaye:

Hello and welcome to this edition of JALM Talk from the *Journal of Applied Laboratory Medicine*, a publication of the American Association for Clinical Chemistry. I'm your host Randye Kaye. The AACC's Global Lab Quality Initiative or GLQI was founded in 2010 with a mission to partner with national societies to improve the quality of laboratory testing worldwide.

While today, the GLQI has several working groups across many regions of the world, at its inception, the GLQI was focused on the Latin American and Caribbean regions. Over the past decade, the Latin American working group or LAWG has provided in-person workshops, on-demand webinars, and other best practice resources for Latin American and Caribbean countries.

A special report in the March 2022 issue of JALM describes the experiences of the LAWG in delivering these resources. The authors describe the challenges and successes of the LAWG and summarized the responses of participant surveys. The authors hope that the report will provide insights that can support the continued expansion of the GLQI efforts.

On today's podcast, we are joined by the first author of this article, Dr. Verónica Luzzi. Dr. Luzzi is the Medical Director of Research and Clinical Trials at the TriCore Research Institute of the TriCore Reference Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Welcome, Dr. Luzzi. Can you start by introducing us to the Global Laboratory Quality Initiative, GLQI, and Latin American Working Group, LAWG? What are these groups? What are their roles and how are they funded?

Dr. Verónica Luzzi:

Sure. Thank you. The Global Lab Quality Initiative or GLQI was also known as the emerging countries program and it was funded through generous endowments by the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation. The mission of this group is to develop and implement innovative programs to promote education and training in lab medicine, especially for low and lower middle-income countries worldwide.

In particular, the LAWG or Latin American Working Group is part of the GLQI and the mission is the same, but focused on Latin American and Caribbean regions.

Randy Kaye: All right, thank you. Now, I know that the LAWG has provided in-person workshops in Latin America and Caribbean countries, how did the workshops get started?

Dr. Verónica Luzzi: They really started from an idea that became reality. Thank you to the funding provided by the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation. We learned pretty soon in the development of this idea that providing workshops in-person was the best way to transfer the expertise that the members of the Latin American working group have. We met early in 2010 and brainstormed and what came out of that meeting was that the intention was not to lecture the attendees on theories or materials that they could find in a book, but rather share experiences, for example, used exercises from the attendees' practice and doing these exercises during the workshop.

The members of the group are very passionate about helping others have an enormous enthusiasm to develop and to help improve the feel of LAC medicine in the LAC region.

Randy Kaye: It sounds like the LAWG has been working very hard to advance the mission. Can you summarize for me some of the topics that have been covered in the workshops and maybe the impact that the initiatives have had on laboratory quality in Latin American and Caribbean countries?

Dr. Verónica Luzzi: Definitely. Since we first met in 2010, the members worked together to deliver training in different aspects of lab quality, mostly focus on lab quality. Because we catered the workshops to the needs of the different regions, we really had to adapt the workshops to the request of the attendees and the leaders on those different countries.

We first started workshops doing quality control and quality management and we were very successful providing training in several of the countries of many of the Caribbean, and one of the figures on our manuscript, figure number two, we actually have a list of the locations of the workshops on the different topics that were covered, but due to the request of some of the associations that we were working with, we developed a workshop covering method evaluations and verifications.

And then we move into risk management. All our workshops are heavily based or heavily focused on the CLSI guideline. That's really helpful, but we're kind of gearing into practical examples of the guidelines. In the risk management workshops that are the ones that we developed in the last

few years, these workshops are mostly presented or actually they're presented in Spanish. They have been presented at the ASM, but we hope to present this workshop in another regions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This year, for example, we're kind of switching gears to be a bit more technical not only focusing in quality, but we're focusing on LCMS techniques and lectures, the workshop is going to be done by doctors Jessica Colon-Franco, Dr. Van Pineda, and myself. We hope to deliver a high-quality program and I think the most remarkable part of our experience is to learn how the attendees apply what they learned and we want to do more and we want to now adapt some of the workshops to virtual delivery.

Randye Kaye: That's a very big agenda and a wonderful mission. What would you say has been the biggest store or the most impactful contribution of the LAWG to date?

Dr. Verónica Luzzi: It's really not very easy to say what the biggest contribution is because I think that's really in the eye of the attendees, the eye of the beholder like they say, but in my opinion, getting to know and getting to contact, initiate a network of support for our colleagues in the Latin American and Caribbean countries is one of the biggest contributions of our group. It is a message to let our colleagues know that they're not alone trying to reinvent the wheel that they have someone that they can connect to. They have gone through the processes of creating or improving quality in a clinical laboratory.

We are not in the process of seeking a way to engage and forge closer ties with our colleagues in the LAC region, and we really need our voices to echo in that region and be present.

Randye Kaye: All right, thank you. Now, let's just talk a bit about travel because of COVID-19. It's been kind of hard to travel. How have travel restrictions impacted the work of the LAWG?

Dr. Verónica Luzzi: It has been very impactful and many of us, instead of attending in-person meetings, we have been delivering all these workshops in Spanish virtually. We have kind of a different approach to it. We do webinars. We do webinars with live Q&A sessions. We have been doing pre-recorded sessions that can be viewed at will.

For example, we just delivered a quality control and quality management webinar with Q&A sessions that was very popular. In that workshop, we had attendees from Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina, to name a few. We're very, very happy about that. We received questions and some of them we answer in

the live session. Some other questions, we're going to use to build a frequently asked questions bank that will be posted in the AACC website. In addition, we are also brain storming several ideas to expand and maintain a network of connections to the lives in the LAC region.

Randy Kaye: All right, thank you. Now, let's talk about lessons that you've learned that maybe you'd like to share with the audience or anything maybe that you feel could have been done differently.

Dr. Verónica Luzzi: Definitely. We always learn new things every time we go to a new country, but I really think that one of the biggest learning curves were to learn how to document our work and how to understand whether we were being successful or not. When we initially started presenting, it wasn't very evident to us how to capture that being successful type of question.

We had created service to learn whether our teachings were well-received, but it was not until we had presented a few of the workshops that we solidified the surveys and standardize the format. If we had, as a group, the opportunity to start from the beginning, I think we would have designed the surveys and the auditing process to learn more about the attendees' use of the training and the gaps that we may have left.

Overall, we are very satisfied with our work and we are hopeful that the network that we have created can be solidified in the years ahead.

Randy Kaye: All right, wonderful. One final question, if anybody listening wants to get involved, can you tell us who can be a member of the LAWG or any of the other working groups of the GLQI and what's the process for joining?

Dr. Verónica Luzzi: Absolutely. We encourage any AACC member to contribute to the education of colleagues in other regions of the world that may have been limited to access to education like we do here in the United States. The process to become a member of the working groups of the GLQI, including the Latin American Working Group is to apply for a volunteer position during the month of January when a call for volunteers takes place.

If there are openings in the Latin American Working Group or any other working group of the GLQI, the working groups will be included in the list or the listed call. Then, a member, an AACC member could apply for these volunteer position putting their name for a specific governance group and then AACC leadership will review the candidates in April.

All appointments will be effective in July of the same year and end in July of whichever the term is, July of three years later, obviously. This appointment is always indicated by an appointment letter. It's a very formal process, but very colloquial and collegial process. Thank you for the question.

Randye Kaye: You're welcome. Thank you so much and thank you so much for joining us today.

Dr. Verónica Luzzi: You're welcome.

Randye Kaye: That was Verónica Luzzi from TriCore Reference Laboratories discussing the JALM special report entitled "Impact of the AACC Global Laboratory Quality Initiative in partnership with professional societies and universities in Latin America and the Caribbean." Thanks for tuning in to this episode of JALM Talk. See you next time and don't forget to submit something for us to talk about.