CSMLS PLA Process

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Who is CSMLS?

Labour Market Shortage

The Prior Learning Assessment Process

Issues for Key Stakeholder Groups

Best Practices Project

Next Steps for CSMLS
The CSMLS

- National **certifying and membership** organization for Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLT) and Assistants (MLA)
- **Non-profit** – funded by member dues and revenue for certification examinations, continuing education courses, etc.
- The **entry to practice** for MLT across the country (except Quebec)
CSMLS Mission

Excellence in medical laboratory science
Who can become certified?

- Graduates of CMA-accredited program
- OR
- Candidates found equivalent through the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) process
  - conducted by CSMLS
Labour Market Shortage

► **MLT shortage imminent**

► *Estimated that 2,450 new positions will be needed by 2015 - 44% of the general MLTs will be eligible to retire*

► **CMA-accredited programs do not supply enough graduates to meet the market place**
Why the Shortage?

- Laboratory services *restructuring* in the 1990s
- Lack of *clinical placements*
- Government policy changes (*education programs*)
- This is not unique to Canada – there is a *global shortage*
The New Reality

Federal and provincial governments are encouraging immigration for a host of reasons – to allow Canada to compete in a global market, declining birth rate etc.

Economic immigrants are highly desirable – they are selected for their ability to integrate rapidly into the Canadian workforce.
The Purpose of PLA

► To establish **equivalency** with the Canadian standard

► If equivalent – client becomes eligible to challenge the national **certification** exam

► **Certification is used for licensure in most provinces**

► **CSMLS does not grant certification without examination**
In 1999, the Council on National Certification (CNC) embarked on a move to develop a “seamless”, more clearly articulated process for assessing credentials of internationally-trained MLTs. 

Endorsed by all provinces except Quebec
PLA @ CSMLSL

Document review of:
- Academic credential assessment report (ICES)
- Language proficiency
- Course content
- Clinical training
- Detailed work history
- Professional development/continuing education

To ensure *equivalency* to the national standard for medical laboratory technology.
PLA By the Numbers

- Annually over **300** applicants
- Over **90%** for General MLT
- Over **700** active files – pre and post assessment clients
PLA By the Numbers

- Less than **15%** are found equivalent
- Over **60%** are equivalent on second assessment (learning plan completed, additional information)
- Not all PLA clients will qualify for certification (too many gaps) - referred to accredited programs
Shifts in Settlement Pattern

► Historically – most applicants (>90%) are from ON, followed by BC

► Changes – increased in BC and AB

► Growing numbers from overseas
Credential Recognition @ CSMLS

- Must meet the **national standard** to be eligible to challenge the certification examination

- **Language proficiency** is essential – HOT TOPIC!

- Must have the ability to **practice safely** and competently – safe for public, self and colleagues
Credential Recognition

Primary Issue

Resource Intensive
Credential Recognition

Issues for CSMLS

- Cost - to establish a process in line with best practices (funded by members)
- Cost - direct (assessment, appeals, additional information for review)
- Cost - indirect (fee collection and processing, document tracking, human resources)
Credential Recognition - Issues for CSMLS

Resource intensive – 10% of the clients consume 90% of the resources

Staffing Additions:
2005 - Customer Service Representative
2006 - Executive Assistant
Credential Recognition

Issues for CSMLS

- Documentation authentication challenges
- Risk management
- Skeptics in the profession – is a paper-based review enough?
Credential Recognition

Issues for Clients

► Original documentation requirement often difficult to obtain
► Amount of detail required
► Very high language standard
Credential Recognition

Issues for Clients

► Time (from application to employment)

► Cost (documentation, assessment fees, TOEFL iBT, courses, programs)

► Lack of accurate information prior to immigrating to Canada
Credential Recognition

Issues for Clients

► Disagree with assessment team report

► Frustration with process for licensure and certification (feel they should be linked)
Credential Recognition

Issues for Employers

► Time (from application to employment)

► Ignorance of PLA/licensing process – some jurisdictions actively recruit overseas without understanding the process
PLA - The Goal for CSMLS

- Maintain the standards of the profession
- Ensure a fair and equitable process
- Transparent process
- Meeting the needs of the profession, the employer and the public
Review of CSMLLS Process

- Third party review, contracted to CAPLA, (subcontracted to Susan Simosko and Associates)
- Partially funded by Government of Canada
- Includes key stakeholder participation

Purpose:
- To ensure best practices
- To validate assessor training
Comprehensive Report, CAPLA

- Goal - focus on PLA in other professions, to advise on best practices – *looking for recommendations on PLA policy ONLY*

- What we got – *huge report* touching on issues such as advocacy, examination policy, certification policy etc.

- No policy changes

- PLA process is in good health!

- Project ended early as a result!
CAPLA Recommendations

► Reviewed by CNC, Board

► Considered in the context of Vision, Mission and Values, resource constraints etc.
Prioritization

- Quick fix, low resource requirement
- Quick fix, moderate resource requirement
- Moderate to high investment (time, money)
- High investment
- Some items will not be pursued
Presented in no particular order:

► Improve external sources of information

► Improve website information, add a FAQ page

► Review, clarify and simplify the language and layout of all CSMLS documents
CAPLA Recommendations

► Personal Competency Rating Booklet be used solely to help candidates self-select in or out of the PLA process

► Make all documents more welcoming

► Provide additional alternatives to applicants for proving English language fluency
CAPLA Recommendations

► Exchange of information/documents between ICES and the CSMLS

► Improve communication systems with applicants

► Create a practice test
CAPLA Recommendations

► Allow candidates from the same country and same school, in the same year to provide fewer educational documents

► Create and offer an OSCE examination

► Reconsider subject certification (one discipline)
CAPLA Recommendations

► Develop an on-line tracking system for PLA files

► CD/PowerPoint presentation about the PLA process

► Continue to work with the Government of Canada to implement and maintain the long-term sustainability of bridging programs across Canada, focusing on didactic and clinical education, as well as profession-specific language proficiency.
Funding Opportunities

- HRSDC
- Provincial ministries of citizenship and immigration (application to Ontario – language standard)

Partnerships to Pursue

- CFEE (Cdn Foundation for Economic Education)
- ICES (document sharing)
- Regulatory bodies (document sharing)
Validation of PLA Assessor Manual

- Systematic approach to PLA file review
- Comprehensive stakeholder input prior to development of manual
- Complex process: simplified into a flow chart approach to assessments
- To enhance inter-rater reliability
Questions?