

An Irish SME's perspective on on traceability and trust

“We know the NML (National Metrology Laboratory) is working to international standards so we have full confidence in their work. Its expertise and knowledge base has been beneficial to us in so many ways.”

TOM HOLMES, HEAD OF OPERATIONS, MEDICAL SUPPLY COMPANY



NSAI

True calibration for success

An interview with Tom Holmes, Head of Operations with the Medical Supply Company

Any hospital patient heading for surgery needs to put their whole trust in the surgical team and the equipment it uses. That includes, for example, the specialist fridges in which blood is stored.



“If a fridge in a blood transfusion department is compromised, patients may not be able to get surgery,” explains Tom Holmes, Head of Operations at Medical Supply Company. “The hospital can be confident that fridge is at the correct temperature because we test it using equipment calibrated and tested by the NSAI’s National Metrology Laboratory (NML).”

Regardless of the equipment or services clients of Medical Supply Company are buying, they must trust completely in them. That comes down to traceability and confidence in the company’s credentials, he adds.

Benefitting from all NML services

One of the largest laboratory supply companies in Ireland, Medical Supply

Company was set up in 1971. It supplies and services specialist equipment for life sciences, pharmaceutical, clinical and diagnostic customers across Ireland.

Since Tom joined the company in 2015, its team has grown from 30 people to over 50, which includes 19 engineers. *“We have worked closely with the NML as we have grown the team in that time, and grown our product and solutions offering as well,”* explains Tom.

It’s vitally important that all Medical Supply Company’s instruments are correctly calibrated, as it provides an accredited temperature mapping and calibration service to its clients. Through the National Metrology Laboratory (NML), NSAI provides not only crucial calibration services covering mass, temperature, electrical, pressure and

time measurements, but also training and consultancy on technical issues.

Not only does NML calibrate equipment for Medical Supply Company on a scheduled basis, but it also advises on prolonging the serviceable life of equipment. *"If an older piece of equipment is borderline in terms of performance, NML will give us our options,"* says Tom. *"They'll explain if we should retire it or if we can adjust it or replace components such as probes to keep it in use."*

Harnessing the value of certification

Medical Supply Company has maintained ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems certification since 1994, and is now working towards achieving ISO 14001 Environmental Management and ISO 45001 Health and Safety Management

"NSAI is already helping us in the roadmap towards that," explains Tom. *"It might seem prohibitive for a company of our size to do the amount of work needed for these, but NSAI breaks it down well. The online store has great guides to getting new certification, and they keep things updated if standards change."*

Medical Supply Company sees certification to ISO standards as delivering true competitive advantage. *"The standards are internationally recognised, and our customers are often multinational companies. Their questions typically stop once they see we have certification to ISO standards, because they can trust it and have confidence in our services."*

He adds that tender documents typically request evidence of certification, but also points to other benefits to the business of

having standards in place. *"It really supports our drive for continuous improvement. It means we have better risk management, and better buy-in and participation from all our teams. In fact, the standardisation process focuses the whole team."*

Expert support with lab accreditation process

The company also holds ISO 17025 Testing and calibration laboratories accreditation through the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB), which is responsible for the accreditation of laboratories, certification bodies and inspection bodies.

"To get this accreditation, you must create a lot of scenarios in a laboratory. It's quicker and better to do much of this work through the NML as it has access to more specialised equipment."

NML acts as the technical advisor to Medical Supply Company each year ahead of its inspection by INAB. *"Our own technical quality staff are excellent, but if something comes up that stumps us, our first port of call is the NML. We have built up a great relationship with their experts. They know how we work and what we do and aren't afraid to tell us we have done something wrong."*

Tom says the NML's expertise is invaluable when it comes to especially complex technical challenges. "NML helps us with these complex issues. They research international standards and procedures, read technical papers, and do other work behind the scenes. It's a fantastic resource to have."

Medical-Supply.ie

+ Find out how working with the NML can benefit your business and request a quote on [nsai.ie/national-metrology](https://www.nsa.ie/national-metrology).



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