**Text box 3: Five foundation stones for Quality Improvement applied to laboratory practice**

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| 1. Focus on the client | * View the service that you provide from the patient’s perspective * Engage patient representatives as key members of your QI team |
| 1. Focus on team work | * Efficient and effective services require team work * What can each member of your existing staff contribute? * Who might require additional in-service training? * Could staff be better organized to improve the service delivered? |
| 1. Focus on data | * Rather than anecdotal reports, what information is available about your service? * Undertake audit to obtain data about specific aspects of the service * Qualitative information from service-users (patients, clinical staff) is essential |
| 1. Focus on systems and processes | * Take a comprehensive view of the whole service from the patient’s perspective * Consider systems such as patient waiting times, the environment where samples are collected and the reporting of results as well as processes such as laboratory protocols |
| 1. Communication and feedback | * Critically important throughout * Starts with engaging key stakeholders to identify areas for service improvement * Regular feedback of performance should encourage staff and identify areas for further improvement |

Adapted from The Five steps to Quality Improvement: A facility based guide to improving clinical outcomes and quality mentorship. Institute for Healthcare Improvement, Department of Health, University of KZN/20,000+