



Combatting the Ebola virus with management systems

“Our team has implemented a structured, incremental approach to bringing the Ebola Treatment Centre to its full 100-bed capacity. This incremental approach is regarded as best practice.”

Glenn Keys

Executive Director of Aspen Medical

Aspen Medical Objectives:

- To be the world leader in the delivery of healthcare solutions
- To ensure a complete focus on client’s needs
- To be focused on the outcome of all client’s projects

Aspen Medical Benefits:

- Access to market
- Competitive differentiation
- Increased brand reputation through triple certification (ISO 9001, ISO 14001, AS/NZS 4801)
- Process improvements through an effective ISO 9001 Quality Management System

Background

Founded in 2003, Aspen Medical is an Australian-owned, global provider of innovative healthcare solutions. They are the world leader in the delivery of healthcare solutions, and service a diverse range of sectors including Oil & Gas, Defence, Mining & Resources and Humanitarian.

Aspen Medical has been an important client to BSI Group since 2006, making them a triple certified client. Their certification includes ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and AS/NZS 4801. Aspen's procedures and processes are some of the most effective in their sector, as they have a comprehensive and robust management system in place.

The Event

Aspen Medical's high regard found them tasked with combatting the Ebola virus in Sierra Leone. Employed by the Government to help other NGOs treat the victims, they were given a short timeframe to mobilize. They were notified on 5 November 2014 and had to get moving.

The deployment was complicated. This involved recruiting for the crisis, establishing a task force and setting up project management. They also had to liaise with the Defence Force and Government of Sierra Leone to ensure the facility they were going to work within was ready. In addition, the Aspen taskforce had to communicate with their NGO counterparts and the World Health Organization as to what issues they were facing.

The Aspen Medical team was operational on 14 December 2014. The team began treating the patients immediately, accurately abiding to their procedures to ensure that the Ebola infection did not spread.

The Challenges

There were a number of challenges that were being faced by the Aspen Medical Team. A major challenge was trying to find qualified individuals willing to enter a quarantine zone

on another continent in a short timeframe. Setting up an entire facility and recruiting skilled locals was hard due to language and cultural barriers.

Personal protective clothing was required to be worn by any person entering the treatment zones. Decontamination was a rigorous process that took up to an hour for each person exiting the hot zones. Thus the rotation of staff was an additional challenge.

The Aspen Medical taskforce faced a lack of situational awareness in Sierra Leone. The area and its customs were unknown to them and they didn't have key contacts in place to assist their arrival.

The taskforce also needed to be trained on the correct procedures, to ensure they were safe in all of their operations. Both the local workers and the medical staff from Australia needed to be educated on the risks of the virus and proper processes to prevent contamination. This was difficult due to the lack of expertise within the local workers.

Ebola isn't a commonly treated illness, and yet it was highly infectious. There had been no more than 20 cases treated in the past and very little medical research to support a cure. This meant that the taskforce risked exposure to one of the deadliest viruses in the world, one where the treatment options are new and largely untested. Over 20% of carers active in Sierra Leone were infected with Ebola, making it very risky to treat.

Implementation

Aspen Medical handled every challenge, using their management system to address their issues. BSI was working with Aspen Medical throughout this journey.

Thanks to BSI, Aspen Medical implemented an effective quality management system which allowed them to hire the correct staff in such a short amount of time.

When looking for safety processes they put in place, Aspen began to understand what equipment they needed at their disposal. Their safety suits that they operated in, needed to be put on in an exact sequence of 42 steps, ensuring that there was no potential for contamination.

Finally, Aspen needed to ensure that when treating the patients, they had correct procedures based on their behaviour and symptoms. The Aspen Medical Taskforce engaged with the other NGOs and worked out what key processes needed to be addressed when providing healthcare.

The pre-deployment training was an intensive 13 days training in Canberra. The members of the team included an Emergency Response Physician as lead, registered nurses, medical practitioners and paramedics. The team had implemented a structured, incremental approach to bringing the Ebola Treatment Centre (ETC) to its full 100-bed capacity. This incremental approach is regarded as best practice. Today, the ETC has 26 beds.

Achievements

The biggest achievement Aspen Medical made throughout the event was that no staff members contracted the Ebola virus. Working closely with a disease so infectious, they were still able to remain uncontaminated. They were able to assist 200 individuals and cure 36 patients that had Ebola.

Much of these achievements came down to the effectiveness of the training that they undertook, and the processes that they implemented to ensure that all patients had received quality healthcare and all of the workers were protected appropriately.

Moving Forward

BSI has an ongoing relationship with Aspen Medical across a number of their projects around the world. A review of the Ebola Aspen Medical experience is still underway.

For further information about BSI training, visit our website at:

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