



A case study on

Opening an office-based lab

With Dr. Sammy Eghbalieh of the
Southern California Multispecialty Center

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Sammy Eghbalieh, MD, FACS, is a vascular surgeon in Southern California. Along with his brothers – all successful surgeons across varying specialties, Dr. Eghbalieh’s Southern California Multispecialty Center has been a resounding success.

Now, as the SCMC team prepares to expand their facility by an additional 3,000 square feet, Dr. Eghbalieh shared four key lessons he’s learned in opening an OBL.

Know your why

ASCs and OBLs are increasingly common, but the roadmap to success is anything but simple. Remembering the strengths and opportunities that set outside-the-hospital facilities apart from their traditional counterparts is imperative for developing a plan for long-term success:

- 1** “First, I think we can be more efficient because we’re dedicated to surgical interventions, and we can build around making that a positive experience for the patients and the doctors and nurses and staff.
- 2** Second, we have the decision-making power. We can use the equipment and systems that work best for the way we work.
- 3** And third, we can get patients scheduled more quickly, get their procedure done more quickly, and they can get on with their lives more quickly,” Dr. Eghbalieh said.

Embrace your mistakes and learn from them

The complexities of opening an OBL, from financing to construction to procurement, can seem overwhelming. As Dr. Eghbalieh put it, “nobody teaches you this stuff in medical school. You learn by doing. That’s true in medical education as well, but there’s no attending [physician] watching over you to make sure you get it right.”

Though managing all aspects of the business was complex, the team had the freedom to make the improvements to their practice as they saw fit.

“We learn all the things that will work, and we learn what does not work. Sometimes you come up with an idea and it’s not quite right, but then you modify it and you make it better. And it’s much easier to do that in an OBL than in a hospital setting, where there’s a lot of resistance to change. Mistakes are part of the process of improvement,” he said. “Success is doing the right thing now to grow your practice in the future.”

Consolidate vendor relationships

Spending more time with patients—and less time on red tape—is one of the goals that drove Dr. Eghbalieh to open his lab. Consolidating vendors for key tools, supplies, and systems can lead to less time spent on operational complexities, and more time spent on treatment.

“...we want to have as much of it with one vendor as possible—the lighting, the bed, all the technology, if it’s integrated it will work more smoothly,” Dr. Eghbalieh said. “One of the things we like is that, when you use the same vendor for most of your technology, you have the same interface for all these systems, and it’s much easier to learn and use,” he continued.

Reducing the paperwork burden is another key benefit of streamlining vendor relationships. “One of the biggest challenges in any practice is having multiple vendors. If you have a lot of vendors, you have a lot of paperwork. It is painful. The less than you have, the more you streamline your operations and then you can focus on your patients more,” Dr. Eghbalieh said.

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Turn vendors into partners

Developing and operating an OBL requires expertise in a wide variety of specialist fields: finance, construction, information technology, billing and accounting, human resources—not to mention the backbone of the OBL: clinical expertise.

It's too much for any one person to know the nuance of each of these fields, which is why it is vital to move beyond traditional vendor-customer relationships to forge partnerships. Dr. Eghbalieh made the decision to work with Siemens Healthineers early in the process, in no small part for access to a broad portfolio of OBL and ASC-focused services, designed specifically to help facilities the Southern California Multispecialty Center thrive.

Equally important is the notion that Dr. Eghbalieh expects his lab to thrive for many years to come. This requires long-term partnerships and guidance to ensure that it continues to deliver the best possible care for patients and a positive, engaging work environment for the staff. "We're not going anywhere. We are going to be working here for another 15 or 20 years," he said.

"If you have a partner who understands up front the competition in the area, how many other OBLs are treating the same types of patients, the patient population, payer mix, and reimbursement, it brings reassurance that you can be successful," Dr. Eghbalieh said.

Dr. Eghbalieh is pleased with the support and guidance—as well as medical technology—Southern California Multispecialty Center continues to receive from Siemens Healthineers. "The thing is, the target is there but sometimes it moves, and you have folks that help you move to meet that new target. We're at a point that we need follow-through as much as we need expertise, and we've been getting that from Siemens Healthineers. That's really vital to us, that ongoing partnership, as we move to the next phase of our growth where we're going to expand Southern California Multispecialty Center to include an ambulatory surgical center," he said.

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