

QC COURSE

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MODULE 3 – THE NEED FOR QC

Introduction

This module will concern the various problems we can meet in the laboratory and what steps we take to try and prevent them happening. We will look at whether QC is effective or not in preventing laboratory errors – and we will define what exactly a laboratory error is and what it means to the users of our service.

Then we will look at the types of materials that can be used for internal QC, and start to define the setting of appropriate and effective QC performance standards – those standards that lead to good, appropriate and effective patient results.

What goes wrong in a lab

Consider the figure below. It shows the percentage of laboratory errors that take place based on a division between the three traditional laboratory work-sections, namely Pre-analytical (Reception), Analytical, and Post-analytical (Reporting).

There are many important lessons to draw from this figure, but let's start at the beginning, as usual with a definition. What do you think is the definition of a laboratory error?

1. It is a QC result that is outside the +/- 2 SD range.
2. It is a sample mix-up.
3. It is a wrong result reaching the patient.

