

## QUALITY MATTERS

No 31, August 2006

### Microbiology EQA Delays

First of all, an apology and a thank you.

We apologise for the fact that Micro reports seemed to disappear for many weeks, while we re-wrote the entire system including the reports. The new reports have finally been completed and sent out, and hopefully you appreciate them, and maybe even think they were worth waiting for. We now only collect and score your organism identification and the antibiotic sensitivity, in other words you send us only the information you send out on patient samples. There are still some ways we hope to improve the EQA, like find some way to include comparisons of MICs, but meantime we hope the reports satisfy your needs.

The thank you is to all of you. The patience and understanding you showed regarding the time involved to re-write this EQA was impressive.

### Phumi

Maybe we are odd, but we now have a manager answering the phones at Thistle. Phumzile Mbokane-Zulu has, as many of you know, been with Thistle for seven years. What most of you will not know is that she has now been promoted to the position of Manager, with responsibilities in the area of checking the electronic report system – and answering phones. We believe that the first voice you hear when you call a company is the most important one, the one that you remember longest. And if that person, like Phumi, can answer your queries without having to relocate you elsewhere within the organisation, then you will be less irritated than if you listen to the “hold music” for minutes each time you are transferred. You are always welcome to ask for the person of your choice, but we know that often our telephonist-manager will be able to solve your problem. And before you tell us, sometimes other voices answer – that’s because Phumi is already busy solving someone else’s problem!

### Data queries

We are now doing more than ever of these for you, hungry as many of you are for information. For those unfamiliar, should you have a request for information along the lines of “How many other people using my instrument show the same performance as myself?”, or “How does instrument XY perform?” we can supply information gladly from our database. A new staff member – Cecli Kleingbiel – handles this aspect of your needs and most such queries are returned within 48 hours. Go on, test the system!

### Web Site Entry

Labs are able to send results to us through the web site. If you wish to do so, contact Marlize at [marlize@thistle.co.za](mailto:marlize@thistle.co.za) for advice and further details. If you follow the on-screen instructions regarding confirmation, then this system works well and saves the time and effort of either faxing or – for those who are still members of the flat earth society – posting results. We are well into this new and very electronic age and at Thistle we are always trying to stay in front of you lot, our customers! Keep on testing us, we love it.

### Diff slides

We mention this EQA again as it the one brought up most often during our seminars – and the one that raises the blood pressure highest! Criticisms are as follow:

- It is too easy
- It is too difficult
- We give too little clinical information
- There are too many “acceptable” diagnoses
- Technologists cannot get them all right
- Too many labs “send slides to pathologists”

We are trying to satisfy these, sometimes conflicting needs, and have taken steps for more relevant – not excessive – clinical information to accompany the slides: for all slides to be reviewed clinically so that, if possible, a primary clinical diagnoses can be made: and the accompanying list of acceptable “technologist” diagnoses does not include every possible option!

Bear with us – we are trying!

By Dr Jim McCulloch

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