

QUALITY MATTERS

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Haematology goes International

This is the final cycle for our local EQA, as next year sees us change dates slightly to link up with the Randox Haematology database. The one big advantage will be the large world wide database, but there being no free lunches, there will be some losses. Firstly, your history will evaporate at that stage, in order for us to fit in with the new way of registering – and that's the second problem. Every lab will need to re-enrol using new registration sheets which we are currently preparing. Finally there will be a delay in starting this new EQA, meaning that Haematology moves to March and September starts each year. We are investigating ways to “fill in” the gap this will create in February, by having a single sample for all labs, to ensure continuity of coverage. More details will flow as soon as we have them.

Cape Town Seminar

Over a hundred people attended our latest seminar, held by the sea, of course. Comments received were generally favourable, but we still need to improve these sessions for our customers. New seminars will be prepared next year and hopefully all lecturers will rate higher than the catering in your markings! One frequent comment received was that people generally want only to attend the talk in their own discipline and we'll try to make this happen by sticking to a set schedule.

Infectious Diseases Serology

Too many labs report “equivocal” and we are wondering if this is the new way to avoid being wrong. It seems to us that some labs never report a negative or positive result, which must amaze their clinician-customers! Anyway, if you need to report “equivocal”, it must be accompanied by the cut-off for that analyte, otherwise we will not accept it and your report will be returned as “not reported”.

Lithium on Drug EQA

AdCom has decided that the new acceptable range for lithium will be +/- 0.2 mmol/l rather than a percentage, at ALL concentration levels, with immediate effect.

EQA Gaps

It is not easy selecting dates to start EQAs. One of the problems we encounter is that gaps appear sometimes, between the end of one cycle and the start of a new one. This happens with all EQAs, especially those with 12 samples per cycle – not too surprising considering there are 52 weeks every year! We will do our best to keep such gaps to a minimum but they will still happen and all we can do is apologise in advance.

Dip Stick EQA

Any interest in this type of programme, testing for all the usual stuff, e.g. glucose, nitrates, proteins, SG, etc? So far we have one keen customer. Any more out there?

Diff Slide Quality

The comments made with regard to the quality of the slides we used throughout Cycle 28 are summarised below:

Slide	Poor	Acceptable	Good
1	2	87	60
2	12	93	50
3	7	109	42
4	21	90	46
5	10	108	44
6	18	98	42

While the assessment of quality varied per slide, we feel that a 92.5% overall for either acceptable or good is an indication of general satisfaction with the quality of our materials. Thanks to all those sending in assessments.

By Dr Jim McCulloch