

QUALITY MATTERS

No 33, November 2006

Rand Exchange Rates

Our recent announcement about linking our prices to the Rand – both up and down – seems to have caused some confusion. We took an average exchange rate over 3 months, to prevent having to work out prices more often, and compared that to the exchange rate at the beginning of 2006. Now, we will collect exchange rates (Rand against British Pound Sterling) and every 3 months review and adjust our prices – again, either up or down – if there has been a significant alteration, i.e. 10% from the average exchange rate used previously. Currently we have priced our products and services, as at 1 October 2006, when the average over the previous 3 months was 13.80. We will review on 1 January 2007 and only make an exchange rate change to our prices if the rate is greater than 15.18 (when we will increase our prices) or lower than 12.42 (when we will decrease our prices. If that's not clear, give me a call.

Oh, and our prices will increase by 5% from MARCH 2007, in line with the current CPI rate of inflation, regardless of what the Rand does.

Unstained or not unstained, that is the question

We have had a request that diff slides be supplied unstained, so that labs can stain them themselves. In many ways this is the right thing to do – treating our samples as close to the way you handle patient samples as possible – but we had a previous request that we not only stain but cover slip the slides, which we now do. So, clear up our confusion and tell us what YOU think we should do. Leave them as they are, or let you stain them in your lab.

Infectious Diseases Serology

We can accept "Positive, negative or equivocal" ONLY for tests on this EQA. Sorry, but "weak positive" will no longer be accepted.

Late orders and late delivery

We have – after years of complaints – had an assurance from RANDOX that they will deliver their samples timeously from now on, cutting down one major irritation at the start of all the relevant EQAs.

And if you order late from us, there is a chance that we will have no samples left. Please note that we always order extra, but that lately even the "extra" samples have been ordered.

Return of goods to Thistle QA

Now and then we make a mistake, or a lab does, that means one of our kits has been delivered in error to a laboratory. We then receive a request for it to be returned. Our problem with this is two-fold. First, we cannot have a guarantee that the kit is in a good enough condition for us to re-send it to someone else – would you like a "second hand kit?" Second, it costs to freight it both ways, a waste of money for us. So, if you have a kit that is no longer needed, please call Marlize or Sandy and arrange for a credit note. BUT we do not want you to send it back.

Relevant Employees

We like to think all our employees are relevant, but the following list will help you to contact the most relevant person for your query.

Sandy – Accounts and invoices

Cecli – IT

Naomi – Main Office supervision, with Mosi and Nomi as her data enterers.

Laura – Stores and despatch

Phumi – Office Manager

Marlize – Everything else

The smart ones will notice that one name is missing – the one at the bottom of this sheet – but we are still trying to force him to agree to a function.

Seminars

Our final two seminars, one in Cape Town in August and one in Johannesburg in November were attended by 160 people in total. The responses are shown below, with the scores averaged between the two presentations

	% Excellent + Good	% Poor
Venue	99	1
Catering	99	1
Intro lecture	100	1
Chem lecture	100	1
Haem lecture	83	17
Micro lecture	97	3

The seminar series is now finished for the time being. We will re-do them at some point in the future and will certainly bear all your valued comments in mind. As we always say in the quality field – there is always room for improvement!

By Dr Jim McCulloch

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PROFICIENCY
TESTING

Accredited to ISO Guide 43 & ILAC G13