

QUALITY MATTERS

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Rand Exchange Rates

Final word, at least for the moment on this subject. We have been constantly monitoring the rand exchange rates – it is called a volatile currency by those who know what that means. To most of us it simple means that prices will rise!

The good news, at least for the moment of writing this, is that the rand has stabilised at the lower end of the rates, and thus we are holding back on our price increase for March. In other words, we are not increasing our prices at this stage. See, sometimes prices do not rise!

Obviously we will monitor the rates and change – up or down – as necessary.

ESR samples and Alifax

We regret to inform you that our ESR samples – and every other sample that we know about – do not work on the Alifax instrument marketed by Beckman. Sadly, if you have one of these machines, you cannot take part in our ESR EQA.

Infectious Diseases Serology

Is there something about those working in Serology that makes them want more and more? Only joking, but you may be pleased to know that we are changing the way we allow “special tests” to be reported back to us. To remind you, we listed the dates and samples for which we would allow particular tests to be reported back to us. Now, it is up to the labs enrolled to decide which samples to analyse for which tests. This could cause problems with regard to the volume of each sample, but currently we cannot change that. Another potential problem relates to the data base i.e. the number of results we receive for each special test. The samples are prior analysed in an accredited laboratory under highly controlled conditions, and these values will be used as target or comparator values, in cases when few results are received. Hopefully this satisfied the needs of this “special” area of lab medicine.

One more thing

I don't know about you, but I for one am delighted to see the back of 2006. This time of the year it is traditional to make resolutions – exercise more, drink less, lose weight, smell the roses, whatever – that we know we will break before the end of January. So, my resolution is not to tell anyone what I resolve to do - except for one. I resolve that this year be a better one for all of us, full of whatever it is that makes you tick better/ faster/ more satisfactory. Go make it happen.

Apo (a) once more with feeling

This analyte is a real nuisance. We cannot seem to get it right, and it is difficult to know if we should a) abandon it, again, b) remove the clinical CV, or c) throw up our hands in anguish and take a long holiday. Option c) looks the most attractive, but ...

We have asked Randox to check their data base, to see if different units or hugely varying methodologies are causing the problem of enormously dispersed results on our data base, i.e. very high SDs and most labs failing the clinical CV evaluation. You will be informed of anything useful that we get back from them. BUT if there is some bright spark out there with an informed view of what to do, please let us know. Frankly, this has us stumped.

PDF Reports over December

We experienced problems with the sending of pdfs over the Festive season – because many of you went on holiday. That meant that those stuffed inboxes could not accept the fairly large pdf reports, and we got them sent back to us. We are jealous but cannot stop you guys going on leave, but returned reports created an unforeseen dilemma for us. We thus stopped sending pdf reports from 16 December 2006 and only restarted on the 8th of January 2007. If you have not received your reports and need them urgently, please contact Thistle QA or send us an email with your request and we will send your reports. All reports from the 16th of December will be sent daily throughout the week of the 8th of January 2007.

BEE

It has been mentioned before, but just to refresh those important and no-doubt-post-holiday-exhausted pieces of grey matter, we are actively exploring the matter of BEE at Thistle QA. The governments latest and final (at least for the moment) regulations were published in December 2006. For those concerned, Thistle QA definitely qualifies as a Qualifying Small Enterprise (QSE) and thus will need to comply with four clauses out of the total of seven promulgated. We have already selected the four we will address in the early months of 2007 and will be sending out a separate document to you all, outlining the ways in which we will become BEE compliant ([see our BEE Letter & Questionnaire on the web site under the category “press centre”](#)). The problem remains though that there are no accredited companies offering BEE – and guess who has been designated to accredited the BEE evaluation companies? That's right SANAS! Once they have started the process, and approved some companies, Thistle will be right there, desperate to have our commitment to this concept, officially approved. Don't hold your breath, though ...

By Dr Jim McCulloch