

QUALITY MATTERS

No 42, January 2008

Haematology EQA

As you ought to know, we have been forced to change suppliers for this EQA. In order to assure you of our best quality samples, we are importing only sufficient for the first three months of the EQA starting in March. Thereafter you will be sent a box to cover the remaining three months. This is necessary because of the short notice we received from our previous supplier that the samples we had used for many years were no longer available. We could only test stability over a short period. We intend doing longer stability checks on the samples we will receive in February and hope to revert to a six month delivery as soon as possible.

Diff slide changes

We have made slight changes to our Diff EQA for the cycle starting in February 2008. Bigger changes will hopefully be made by the cycle starting in August 2008. We intend sending out lists of diagnoses for labs to tick, rather than allowing the "free-hand" writing of diagnoses as at present. There are many reasons for wishing to do this. Not only will it reduce our error rate in trying to decipher bad hand writing, but it also has given us the chance to tidy up our huge list of diagnoses, using the helpful experts on AdCom. We have removed duplications, old-fashioned terminology, and many diseases that could not possibly have been made from a slide anyway! The list is almost ready and will be sent out for comments when finalised. Also note the letter that we will be sending with your Diff kit in February 2008.

Microbiology EQA

A slight change to the Micro EQA is taking place. We will still send out two organisms per month, but each will be listed for separate testing, roughly two weeks apart. In addition, those who purchase a "half-pack" will no longer receive two organisms every second month – why did we ever do this anyway? Instead these labs, which are usually branch labs, will receive one appropriate organism for testing every month. Logical, huh?

A Christmas Story

Even the staff of Thistle QA are allowed leave over the festive season. And thus it came to pass that one day the boss, i.e. me, was alone in the office after three in the afternoon. When the phone rang, of course I answered it – we guarantee we will be available until four, as you all know. Unfortunately, all the calls were from other unfortunates not on leave and EVERY ONE of them wanted me to check that we had received their faxed results.

Now, I struggled to do two things. First how to find and confirm faxes had been received – I know it sounds easy, but have you any idea how many we receive on a daily basis? No, me neither. Second, I could not get on with what I had stayed behind to do.

There are several solutions to this issue. The first option is to cancel all leave for all Thistle staff for ever, thus happily preventing me from ever having to sound like an idiot (apologies to those I spoke to. I really tried to help), but probably ensuring that they would all resign long before next Christmas. The second option is to change the current system. It really is Dickensian for people to have to send faxes in the first place, let alone have to phone to see we have received them!

So, we are investigating ways to make what happens now simpler and more efficient. But meantime we ask that as many of you as possible use the web site to send us results. It has the advantage that we always receive the results and you automatically get a confirmatory email telling you so. Mail Cecli (cecli@thistle.co.za) for your individual password to use this facility – PLEASE.

Read the next bit for another, new advantage

Web Site

We would strongly suggest you use the web site to enter and submit your results. This is very easy to use – follow the guidelines step-by-step, or if unsure, please email cecli@thistle.co.za for assistance. You must remember to request your user name and pass word before submitting your results – again email Cecli.

By Dr Jim McCulloch