

QUALITY MATTERS

No 44 March 2008

Do late results skew our data base?

We were asked this recently. Some time before we had counted the number of late results, results that came in after the cut off. The percentage was small, less than 1% - but we didn't check to see the effect on our data base. Some people have commented that late results cause "big" changes to their perceived performance, i.e. their blob moves markedly on the Levey-Jennings. It seems logical that this could be the case when the data base is small, but we decided to repeat the evaluation. We have selected some sensitive (low data base) assays and will be counting the percentage of late results AND what difference they make to our means and SDs. And before someone says it: we know that the easiest approach would be to dis-allow late results but many of our rural labs have genuine and continual problems in getting results to us on time. We cannot punish them for factors they cannot control. We'll keep you informed about this evaluation

Pdf Reports are prettier than the printed ones

For those of you who don't know, our pdf reports are very different to the ones we print and post. This is an old issue related to changing the printed reports for electronic transmission. We are beginning an evaluation of making them both more or less the same, to improve our service to "printed reports" participants. It will mean we can produce one set of instructions, if there is no other advantage. If you are currently receiving printed reports, please consider changing to receiving electronic reports - changing the current printed ones may take some time.

Changes to Microbiology EQA

Microbiology will be changed from the cycle starting in April 2008. From this cycle we will date samples for analysis every two weeks, instead of two every month. This will allow us to create logical "odd" and "even" week kits. We are working on adding the Microbiology to our list of programmes that you will be able to send results through our website. A letter will be sent out when this has been implemented and tested. Please note that you will need a username and password to be able to enter your results using our website, please email cecli@thistle.co.za and supply her with your name, laboratory name, contact details and email address to ensure that the information is sent to you without delay.

Changes to ESR EQA

ESR results can now be added using our website. If you need a username and password email cecli@thistle.co.za, please supply your name, laboratory name, contact details and email address to ensure that the information is sent to you without delay.

Changes to HbA1C EQA

From the new cycle that starts in April, we will be able to send your HbA1C reports via email, please contact Phumi@thistle.co.za to add your email address. Please remember to supply her with your participant number (QA number), as this will assist her in adding your information without backward and forward emailing for participant numbers.

Haematology Reports

Please note that - as soon as possible - we will be deleting the "overall" Levey-Jennings from this report. It was added some time ago to offer some assistance for labs using instruments with low data bases. BUT it seems only to be causing distress and confusion. Our plan is to replace it with a graph showing your CLINICAL performance, but meantime, it will be removed. Remember, when looking at haematology reports with overall stats graphs - IGNORE THEM, and make sure your dear, sweet SANAS assessors ignore them too!

Getting through to Thistle, version 78765

Yup, we know that faxes are a problem, made even worse by load shedding. We have several steps in mind to solve the issue - no, not the load shedding, sadly, just the faxes. We intend buying a new fax machine; but we want as many people to use our web site for data entry as possible - and if you haven't got internet access, we can send you blank forms to email to us; and we know how frustrating it is to get "no returns" on your reports BUT it will continue to happen. As in so many features of life, we cannot always control the event happening, but we are in control of how we respond to it, or what it makes us feel. So, a recommendation. Simply give us a call if you have sent a fax and you got a no return report back from Thistle. Ask us, politely if possible, to reprint / resend your report with results correctly in place. If anyone complains about your "failure" to send in results, ask them where they've been for the last three months of load shedding. Please DO NOT phone the office for a fax reference number. This checking system doesn't work - very seldom do people get told "sorry, we haven't received your fax". It has become a waste of time for us and for you. Just remember: Like you, we are also trying to do our best in these fascinating and difficult times.

By Dr Jim McCulloch