

National External Quality Assurance Advisory Panel for Medical Microbiology

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PATHOLOGISTS
and
THE JOINT WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PATHOLOGY

April 2013 March 2014

1. Panel meetings

The Panel met on 3rd June and 7th November 2013 at RIBA, Portland Place, London.

2. Panel membership

Dr K Bamford	(Society for General Microbiology)
Dr L Hesketh	(Microbiology in Association of Clinical Biochemistry)
Dr G Horne	(British Infection Society)
Dr J Gray	(Co-opted virologist)
Dr A Galloway	(Association of Clinical Pathologists)
Dr M Morgan	(ACP, from April 2010)
Prof J Parry	(Clinical Virology Network)
Dr A Elston (Chair)	(Royal College of Pathologists)
Prof V Edwards-Jones	(IBMS)
Dr M A Zuckerman	(Co-opted virologist)
Dr E Smyth	Attends Panel meetings as an observer from the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland

Due to retirement, Prof V Edwards-Jones stepped down in November after serving four years as the IBMS representative on the Panel.

3. Scope of responsibility

The Panel continues to review performance of laboratories from the UK and Republic of Ireland participating in all microbiology schemes organised by UK NEQAS, QCMD (Quality Control for Molecular Diagnostics) and antibiotic assay schemes organised by 4 providers (RIQAS, WEQAS, Heath Control/LGC and UK NEQAS). The panel agreed to amend its terms of reference to include a quorum of four.

4. Review of EQA schemes

The Panel continued to review the revisions and developments within the UKNEQAS schemes.

The Microbiology Interpretative EQA continued and was considered a success.

5. Response to laboratory poor performance

The Panel continues to monitor poorly performing laboratories both directly and indirectly through scheme organisers. Most issues are resolved by initial contact between the scheme organiser and participant. Repeat samples and technical advice are freely available. After a second period of poor performance, there is a Panel review, and a confidential letter sent to the laboratory offering advice and support. Poor performance may be recognised through technical errors and/or failure to return EQA reports, which may be regarded as an organisational failure. With a third successive period of poor performance, the Chairman makes direct personal contact with the laboratory head. This process has continued to achieve satisfactory resolution of virtually all performance issues.

At the November meeting the panel agreed to send letters from the chair to laboratories that were in receipt of several organiser and or panel letters from different schemes; this was an attempt to help identify and intervene in laboratories that might be heading towards persistent poor performance.

6. Number of laboratories (United Kingdom) designated as poor performers (PP) or persistent poor performers (PPP) for each scheme in 2013

<u>Microbiology Scheme</u>	<u>Poor performers</u>	<u>Persistent poor performers</u>
<u>UK NEQAS for Microbiology</u>		
Antibiotic assay	2	
Antimicrobial susceptibility	5	
EBV DNA quantification	1	
Faecal parasitology	1	
Hepatitis B serology	3	
HIV serology	2	
HIV1 RNA quantification	1	
MRSA screening	1	
Rubella serology	2	
Syphilis	2	2
Urinary antigen - legionella	2	

One letter of Chairman's concern was issued for multiple Panel and/or Organiser letters regarding performance in different schemes to a UK NEQAS participant.

QCMD provided an Annual Report of their activities to Panel members. As previously noted it was possible to identify laboratories that were having problems with certain analyses. As with UK NEQAS, it is usually possible to resolve problems at scheme organiser level.

<u>Microbiology Scheme</u>	<u>Poor performers</u>	<u>Persistent poor performers</u>
<u>QCMD</u>		
Enterovirus		3
Respiratory Syncytial Virus		1
Metapneumovirus		1

Parechovirus panel		1
Varicella-Zoster virus	2	
Norovirus	1	
Rhinovirus	1	
MRSA DNA	1	
JCBK DNA	1	

The Panel also reviews the performance of antibiotic assays through four separate EQA schemes. Over the past year, all poor performance has been dealt with by the respective scheme organisers.

Poor performance of laboratories from the Republic of Ireland is reported separately to Dr E Smyth (observer on the Panel).

No UK laboratory was identified as a poor performer or persistent poor performer in other microbiology schemes.

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7. Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the close working relationships and support received by panel members from Dr Vivienne James, Christine Walton and Dr Brigitte Senechal (UK NEQAS for Microbiology), Prof Peter Chiodini (UK NEQAS for parasitology), Dr Elizabeth Johnson (Mycology scheme advisor), Prof Alasdair MacGowan and Andrew Lovering (UK NEQAS for antibiotic assay scheme), Dr John Wilson (Heathcontrol, Cardiff), Annette Thomas (WEQAS), Robert Cascone and Gillian Kansanaho (RIQAS), and, Caterina Di Lorenzo and Dr Paul Wallace.

Dr R A Elston
Chairman Microbiology Panel
 July 2014