

Forum Meeting III – Minutes Synopsis

The third Meeting of the Eurogentest Forum took place on 9/10 May in Amsterdam, following the ESHG Conference.

All EQA scheme organisers were present, apart from representatives of the German Haematological FISH EQA and the Finnish EQA. Newcomers to the Forum Meeting were Rod Howell (WP1.4), Piotr Litynski (WP1.5). As it was agreed at the Unit 1 Board Meeting in Oxford earlier this year, representatives of WP1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 would attend each other's meetings to add their discipline's experience and expertise.

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and Forum members will receive a draft summary of the ECA Cytogenetic Guidelines and quality assurance prior to their launching on the EGT website and publication in the ESHG Journal.

The Forum was given an update of the progress with the CEQA website as well as information about accreditation and the availability of the UKNEQAS for Clinical Cytogenetics Quality Manual.

The need for robust generic European SOPs was discussed and Forum members were invited to suggest areas in which reference materials were urgently required for new cytogenetic technologies. The Forum were offered CD Roms with example SOPs for a diagnostic cytogenetic lab. These example SOPs are available to any cytogenetic laboratory considering accreditation.

The Forum Meeting went on to discuss poor performance in EQA schemes. According to the OECD Guidelines "there should be EQA and the EQA provider should be accredited and be recognised internationally. Performance should be measured and poor performance should be monitored." Although these guidelines currently apply to Molecular Genetics only, it is expected that they will, in time, be applied to Cytogenetics as well. The Forum received details of the way in which poor performance is measured in German and UK EQA schemes. The Forum agreed that it was problematic to enforce but it was important to keep track of poor performers and that there should be a punitive aspect attached to persistent poor performance. It was suggested that, for the CEQA pilot, both the German and the UK marking system should be tried initially to iron out any possible flaws with either system, prior to adopting one system for the EQA

Accreditation and the relevant criteria were discussed in detail and the relevant ISO standards were introduced. Appropriate amendments were made to the EQA Guidelines document. The corrected version will be distributed to the Forum prior to publication on the EGT website.

The Forum moved on to defining the marking criteria with the main points being

- ISCN – all seem to do the same
- Chromosome Karyotype– all countries do the same
- Completeness of analysis and investigation (retrospective EQA)
- Written Description of the karyotype

- Standardisation of reporting

Banding scores were discussed and it was agreed that WP1.4 would work out and propose standards for CEQA.

The Forum were invited to suggest laboratories to take part in the first CEQA Pilot.

The Forum was informed of Eurogentest's commitment to helping national schemes and that, while there is no large budget for this, money would be made available for meetings or workshops such as FISH workshops for national schemes considering the introduction of FISH EQA.

The need for training CEQA assessors was discussed and it was agreed that, while training should initially only be for CEQA assessors, this should, eventually, be opened to national scheme assessors.

It was suggested that countries not running an EQA scheme should be invited either to the Forum meetings or to EQA workshops.

The date and venue of the next Forum meeting will be 2 and 3 October 2006 in Berlin.