

Although ISCN has been in use for many years and is needed for reporting, this was the first time an educational session was organized at an ECA meeting. The session very well attended and the number of people standing showed how much EQA members wanted to learn from the new release of ISCN 2013.

The session was presented by Rosalind Hastings (Scheme Organizer for both CEQA & UKNEQAS for Clinical Cytogenetics). During her introduction, Ros explained that the purpose of the session was to help people to understand the ISCN. Over the many years that the quality schemes have been running, they have seen multiple ISCN (sometimes up to 20 different versions) given for each case.

Ros introduced Annet Simons, an ISCN committee member who, before going into her talk, mentioned that a letter with all the changes in the new ISCN version (ISCN 2013) can be found on the CEQA and UK NEQAS websites. Annet also announced that a paper on the changes¹ had been published the day before the meeting.

During the talk, Annet went through the different chapters of the ISCN explaining some of the changes in the new version. The most important one is the introduction of a new chapter on “Region Specific Assays” (RSA, chapter 15). This chapter covers nomenclature for new cytogenetic techniques, including MLPA, QF-PCR, BoBs and region specific arrays. Chapter 14 is now only for genome wide arrays nomenclature.

After the talk there were several suggestions from the audience to try to make the ISCN user-friendly. Annet is open to receive suggestions by mail so that the ISCN committee can consider them for the next edition.

In the second part of the session, Ros Hastings and Marta Rodriguez de Alba presented real examples of the different ISCN reported in CEQA and UK NEQAS, in the format of an interactive quiz with the audience. The quiz included constitutional, haematology, FISH and array cases. Audience responses showed that some cases still represent a problem and people have many doubts about which ISCN is the correct form.

There was positive feedback from the session with many attendees commenting that they found the session very helpful.

¹ Simons A, Shaffer LG, Hastings RJ: Cytogenetic Nomenclature: Changes in the ISCN 2013 Compared to the 2009 Edition. Cytogenet Genome Res, June 28, 2013.

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