

Benchmarks

The edition of **Benchmarks** covers Evaluations update, National Standard Methods for the future, National Standard Methods - documents for comments, Education and training reminder, and International update.

Evaluations update

Several new evaluation reports are available listed in the table below and presented in full on the website of the HPA's Microbiological Diagnostics Assessment Service (HPA-MiDAS; www.hpa.midas.org.uk).

These include evaluations in collaboration with the National Blood Service on six CMV IgG/total kits, three rubella IgG/total kits, and six Architect kits (HIV, HCV, HBsAg, syphilis, rubella & CMV). A large-scale multi-centre evaluation of four chlamydia NAAT kits against a panel of urine specimens is also now available.

Forthcoming publications include a paper on 'Improvement in the performance of HIV screening kits' to be published in *Transfusion Medicine*; a buyers guide on molecular extraction instruments and a protocol for assessing the efficacy of anti-infective catheters (the latter two commissioned by the Centre for Evidence-based Purchasing, CEP).

We are interested to know if your laboratory is currently undertaking any evaluations so that the information can be shared across the microbiological community and to help ensure that the best kits/devices are being used (please call 0208-327-6949 or email midas@hpa.org.uk).

Keith Perry, Head of HPA-MiDAS

Table to show status and progress of Evaluation Reports

Topic	Lead lab	Output type	Progress indicator*			Target completion
			Setup	Practical	Report	
CleanCatch Midstream urine collection device	HPA-MiDAS	Evidence Review		NA		Completed
Roche HIV Combi	HPA-MiDAS	Evaluation				Completed
<i>Chlamydia trachomatis</i> NAATs	HPA-MiDAS	Evaluation				Completed NEW
Cytomegalovirus IgG/total kits (NBS)	HPA-MiDAS	Evaluation				Completed NEW
Rubella IgG/total kits	HPA-MiDAS	Evaluation				Completed NEW
Abbott Architect (6 kits)	HPA-MiDAS	Evaluation				Completed NEW
Improvement in performance of HIV kits	HPA-MiDAS	Paper				Accepted
Anti-infective catheters	HPA-MiDAS	Study protocol		NA		Aug 2008
Molecular extraction instruments	HPA-MiDAS	Buyers Guide		NA		Aug 2008
<i>Clostridium difficile</i> toxin kits	Bristol	Evaluation				Aug 2008
HIV rapid test devices	HPA-MiDAS	Evaluation				Sep 2008
MRSA selective media	Cambridge	Evaluation				TBD
Cytomegalovirus IgG/total kits (CEP)	HPA-MiDAS	Evaluation				Nov 2008
<i>Clostridium difficile</i> toxin kits	Leeds	Evaluation				Nov 2008

* Shaded cells represent % completion; TBD: To be determined; N/A: Not applicable

National Standard Methods for the future

We've been working with you for over 12 years to standardise microbiological methods through the National Standard Methods Working Groups and over this time have developed over 200 Standard Operating Procedures, algorithms and guidance notes. As you know there are three groups who take on this responsibility: the National Standard Methods Working Group for Clinical Bacteriology which I chair, the Virology Working Group for Quality Standards chaired by Ken Mutton, and the Regional Food, Water and Environmental Co-ordinators Forum chaired by Jim McLauchlin.

We are embarking on a number of initiatives to take us into the next 10 years including currently drafting a number of clinical syndromic algorithms which will guide clinicians and diagnostic laboratories in choosing the appropriate pathway for the investigation of a sample, based upon the patient's clinical indicators and symptoms, to facilitate the most appropriate use of the services available. The algorithms are intended to be a minimum standard with references and links to the more detailed, relevant National Standard Methods (NSMs). Two other planned initiatives are development of molecular methods and a book of introductions and will form part of the National Standard Method repository. However there are still a number of areas we need to tackle and we ask for your comments on the following:

- How can we encourage all laboratories to participate in the consultation process?
- What do users of National Standard Methods want?
- What areas of the methods can we improve
- What are the future priorities?

National Standard Methods – documents for comments

Your comments are requested on the following under review and draft documents by 4th July 2008 via the National Standard Methods website link:

http://www.hpa-standardmethods.org.uk/comment_sops1.asp

BSOP 25 Investigation of continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis fluid

<http://www.hpa-standardmethods.org.uk/documents/bsop/pdf/bsop25.pdf>

BSOP ID 14 Identification of anaerobic cocci

<http://www.hpa-standardmethods.org.uk/documents/bsopid/pdf/bsopid14.pdf>

BSOP ID 15 Identification of anaerobic actinomycetes

<http://www.hpa-standardmethods.org.uk/documents/bsopid/pdf/bsopid15.pdf>

BSOP ID 25 Identification of anaerobic Gram-negative rods

<http://www.hpa-standardmethods.org.uk/documents/bsopid/pdf/bsopid25.pdf>

QSOP 13 Auditing in Health Protection Agency Laboratories

<http://www.hpa-standardmethods.org.uk/documents/qsop/pdf/qsop13.pdf>

QSOP 48 Investigation of viral encephalitis and meningitis

<http://www.hpa-standardmethods.org.uk/documents/qsop/pdf/qsop48.pdf>

VSOP 43 Investigation of viral encephalitis

<http://www.hpa-standardmethods.org.uk/documents/vsop/pdf/vsop43.pdf>

Please send comments by 4th July 2008 via the National Standard Methods website link

http://www.hpa-standardmethods.org.uk/comment_sops1.asp

To access the secure National Standard Methods site and obtain a password or in cases of difficulties please contact Janet Norcup (Janet.Norcup@HPA.org.uk)

Ruhi Siddiqui, Head of Standards Unit

On behalf of the Evaluations and Standards Laboratory and the National Working Groups developing SOPs, algorithms and guidance notes: <http://www.hpa-standardmethods.org.uk/>

Education & Training - Reminder

There are still a limited number of spaces available on the following two day course: 'On board with Legionella and Norviruses' to be held at the HPA - Centre for infections (Colindale) 30th -31st July 2008. The course will provide a background to Legionella and Norvirus and an understanding of recognising and approaching an investigation and reporting cases.

Satnam Sagoo, Head of Education and Training Unit

International update

We have recently contributed to two overseas meetings presenting the UK approach to standardising methods and assuring quality. At the European Society for Clinical Virology meeting in Lapland in March, I opened a 7:30 am one hour breakfast session, describing the development and wide consultation process of standardizing methodologies in the UK.

Keith Perry then gave a talk entitled 'Improving the quality of assays used in diagnostic laboratories'. To highlight the different approaches and levels of assessment he referred to three example evaluations (Chlamydia NAATs, HIV kits and in-house real-time PCRs). He

went on to explain some of the issues and dilemmas facing evaluations in the UK including funding, good evaluation practice and awareness of which evaluations are being undertaken.

Jacqueline Fryer from NIBSC then presented preliminary findings from the three-way collaboration from NIBSC, the CVN and the HPA on the development of working reference materials for clinical virology for diagnostic nucleic acid amplification technique (NAT) based assays, particularly real-time PCR. Preliminary results indicate a high level of variability in intra- and inter-assay detection of these targets, highlighting the need for standardisation of NAT-based molecular diagnostics.

I was invited to participate at a joint WHO-CDC International Conference on Health Laboratory Quality Systems in Lyon, France in April. Over 60 countries contributed to discussions on improving quality systems in laboratories in resource limited countries. My role was to describe the development of national standard methods in the UK. Impressive presentations were made by people from Tanzania, Thailand, Trinidad and others about their progress in introducing quality systems into their laboratories. Some of you will know that I facilitated a meeting in Trinidad in December 2004 primarily to assist in the standardisation of methodologies in the Caribbean. Jacqui Watts from Bristol HPA lab continued working on the European funded project and the Caribbean standard methods are now freely available on the CAREC web site.

We continue to work closely with our Italian colleagues who translate the national standard methods and make them freely accessible to Italian microbiologists via their own website or via the Standards Unit Website. Our latest collaboration is learning from them how they develop syndromic algorithms.

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