

National External Quality Assurance Advisory Panel for Reproductive Science

Annual Report to the Royal College of Pathologists' Joint Working Group for Quality Assurance in Pathology.

April 2013 to March 2014

1. Panel meetings:

The Panel met on 3rd October 2013 and 21st February 2014 at Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Trust.

2. Panel membership

Dr P Bishop (Chair) (Royal College of Pathologists)
Dr B Woodward (Chair elect) (Royal College of Pathologists)
Dr J Kirkman-Brown MBE (British Andrology Society)
B Duffy (Institute of Biomedical Science)
K Biddick (Association of Biomedical Andrologists)
Dr R Gregoire (Association of Clinical Embryologists)
Dr K McEleny (British Fertility Society)

Due to retirement, Dr K Lindsay and Dr I Lewis Jones stepped down in October 2013 after serving for many as the Association of Clinical Biochemistry representative and British Andrology Society representatives respectively on the Panel. Dr Lindsay is also the outgoing Panel Chair.

3. Scope of responsibility

The Panel continues to review performance of laboratories from the UK participating in the reproductive science schemes organised by UK NEQAS. This year, the Panel agreed to amend its Terms of Reference to include a member of the British Fertility Society. The Association of Clinical Biochemists' place on the committee is currently vacant and a letter was sent to the ACB asking whether they wished to continue to be included, but no reply has yet been received.

4. Review of EQA schemes

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

5. Response to laboratory persistent unsatisfactory performance

The Panel continues to monitor poorly performing laboratories both directly and indirectly through the Scheme Organiser. Most issues are resolved by initial contact between the Scheme Organiser and participant. Repeat samples and technical advice are freely available.

After 12 months of persistent unsatisfactory performance, there is a Panel review, and a confidential letter is sent to the laboratory offering advice and support followed up by contact from the Chair. Unsatisfactory 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 Chair makes direct personal contact with the laboratory head. This process has continued to achieve satisfactory resolution of virtually all performance issues.

6. Number of laboratories (United Kingdom) designated as persistent unsatisfactory performers

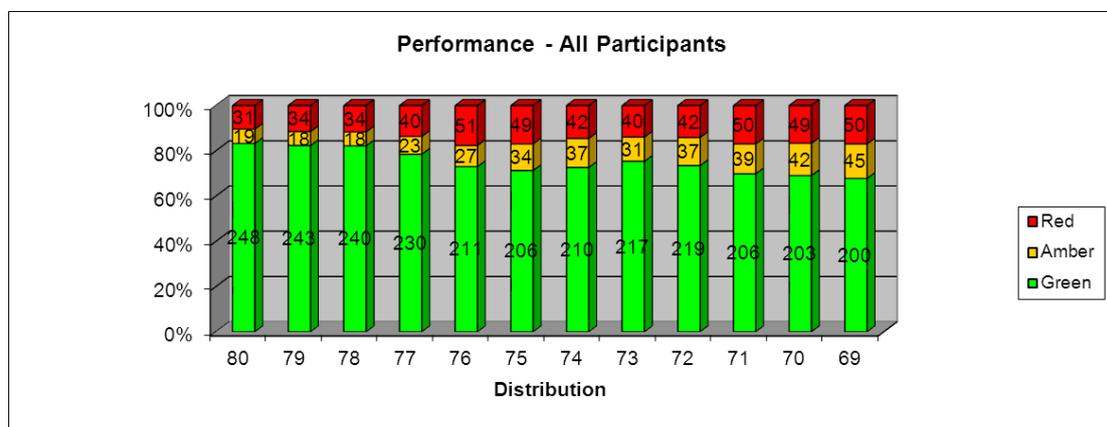
Embryology scheme

Currently (as of Distribution 80) there are no Persistent Unsatisfactory Performers in the Embryology scheme.

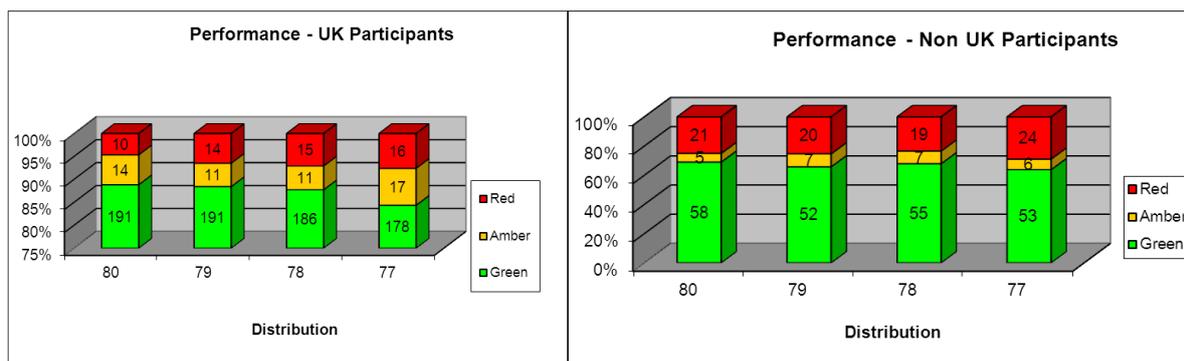
Andrology scheme

For performance, the Andrology scheme is taken as a whole. Therefore, Persistent Unsatisfactory Performance in any one aspect of the scheme classifies Participants as unsatisfactory.

The chart below shows performance in the Andrology scheme over the past three years. The Distribution axis runs right to left.



The below charts separate out performance of UK labs from non UK laboratories (for the past 12 months).



As can be seen from the above graphs the close work between the NQAAP and the UK NEQAS scheme has reduced the number of RED participants during the year. Although the Panel has no jurisdiction over non-UK labs, we have approved an email that will be sent to non UK RED participants to support them and assist them in improving performance.

Dr B Woodward
Chair Elect Reproductive Science Panel
 June 2014

Report from The Association of Biomedical Andrologists (ABA)

It has been a very busy year behind the scenes at ABA with frustratingly slow but none-the-less steady progress. As I enter the twilight of my time as Chair I can reflect on what we have achieved over the last 3 years with a feeling of satisfaction and contentment; we have made good progress in building on the foundations laid by our previous Chair, Dr. Kevin Lindsey for taking our profession forwards.

The ABA logbook scheme has grown significantly in size and activity with new modules to cover donor recruitment, audit and cryopreservation now firmly established.

Our 2012 Guidelines for Good Practice were published in Human Fertility and stand as a valuable resource for us all. Further collaborative updated guidelines for the assessment of post-vasectomy semen are scheduled for 2015.

We have forged closer links with the British Andrology Society (BAS) and Association of Clinical Embryologists (ACE) by hosting joint events such as the Liquid Nitrogen Training Day alongside our most recent AGM. We have plans to further develop these relationships moving forwards and offer our members other courses and events hosted by ABA tailored to the specific needs of Andrologists.

I am also very happy to inform you that as we enter 2015 the future is looking brighter than ever.

In February 2015 representatives of ABA and the BAS are attending a ground-breaking meeting to discuss the future of Andrology training and begin the process of establishing an infrastructure for Andrology as a discipline in its own right within the Scientific Training Program (STP). This in itself is a massive step forward and something we have been lobbying for strongly over the last 4 years. Should this project go forward it would mean that accredited training for Andrologists with a direct route to State Registration as an Andrologist would be available for the first time. In addition we are looking at developing a syllabus for a Practitioner Training Program (PTP), which would underpin the STP scheme at the Practitioner level and allow access to the Voluntary Practitioner Register established by the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS). It has taken us some time but finally it seems our aspirations for stand-alone recognition of Andrologists as competent and capable scientists in our own right are becoming a reality.

We have also invested in a brand new website which is currently under construction and scheduled to go live in June with a number of key novel features to enhance the membership experience with value added benefits for us all. We will have screenshots and more information to share with you at this year's AGM in May.

So as I look forward and consider my retirement from the Chair, I feel ABA is in very good health and in very safe hands with our Chair Elect Dr. Bryan Woodward. Bryan's strong links with the RCPATH and acute awareness of the needs and requirements of our profession will ensure that the next 3 years are going to be very exciting and worthwhile for all of us.

I'd like to thank you all for your support and encouragement during my time as Chair and wish you all the very best for the future.

Report from The Association of Clinical Embryologists (ACE)

My first year as Chair of ACE, having taken over from Rachel Cutting, concluded with Fertility 2015, where ACE Chaired the Organising Committee and I accepted the role of Conference Chair. I think they call that 'in at the deep end'! That said I am very proud to have contributed what I could to what many people have described as our most successful joint meeting with the BFS and SRF to date and we have certainly laid solid foundations for future successful collaborations.

It has been a highly successful year for ACE. We appointed our first President, Dr. Karen Turner into this prestigious role and also formed our first Scientific Advisory Committee to work with ACE and add an additional academic pedigree to our publications and decision-making processes which we felt would benefit the association. The inaugural SAC was formed of four members, Prof. Daniel Brison, Prof. Mary Herbert, Dr. Roger Sturmey and Dr. Dagan Wells, a Reproductive Science 'dream-team' if ever there was one.

Work on the MSC educative framework is on-going with Nicky Monks playing a pivotal role. It was an honour this year at the Fertility 2015 Gala Dinner to not only be recognising the achievements of ACE Certificate Trainees but also our STP Graduates who represent the future of our workforce and clearly indicate how successful the STP has been in delivering high calibre and competent Embryologists into the workforce. What we need to ensure is that there are sufficient trainees entering the STP to ensure the strength of our future workforce. With this in mind, ACE plans to invest further resources in raising awareness in the STP scheme with a particular focus on training in our private sector centres in 2015. If you were at Fertility 2015 you may have seen on the ACE membership stand a lot of new printed information and resources both for candidates and potential training centres and a lot more information will follow later in the year following our 2015 Best Practice Meeting to be hosted in April in Sheffield on the subject of future training and development. In addition, a lot of work continues to go on behind the scenes building a framework and detailed syllabus content for practitioner (PTP) level training. In addition, we had our first candidate embark on the Higher Specialist Scientific Training (HSST) program and we wish her every success.

There is a lot of work still to do and the ACE Executive committee continue to work tirelessly to guide the association forwards in a very dynamic and uncertain environment. Of course, this would not be possible without the support and dedication of our Training and CPD Committees and our Association Webmaster. We have invested in a mobile-friendly CPD app to allow members to record CPD whilst on the move which will automatically download data into their main CPD records the next time a network connection is established.

In 2015 ACE appointed a new Secretariat, Profile Productions who we look forward to working with over the next 3 years to further develop and improve the efficiency

and efficacy of ACE as an organisation and ensure that our annual meetings and other organised events continue to raise the bar as both educative and networking resources.

This is a very exciting time for our science and we feel well placed to lead ACE forwards into the next decade with a solid framework in place to ensure the highest possible standards of reproductive science are attained and maintained.

And when we are finished with all of that you will find us, exhausted, in the bar.

Mr S Harbottle
Chair ABA and ACE