UK NEQAS

# Histocompatibility & Immunogenetics

## UK NEQAS for H&I Newsletter March 2024

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#### 1. News

This Newsletter contains important information about registration and changes to schemes for 2024-25. Please make sure you make all staff involved in testing EQA samples aware of the changes. Full details of all schemes are available in the 2024-25 Participant Manual which is available to download from our website <u>www.ukneqashandi.org.uk</u>.

#### **Annual Re-Registration is Open**

The registration process can now be completed online using the Participants' Portal. Please log on to the system and complete your registration for 2024-25 as soon as possible. The first distribution in 2024-25 will be Scheme 3/4A1/4A1i on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2024. The distribution timetable is available on our website: https://uknegas.org.uk/calendar.

#### **Award Winners!**



The UK NEQAS team were the proud winners of the Sustainability Award at the 2023 Velindre University NHS Trust Employee Excellence Awards for the implementation of more environmentally conscious packaging.



# UK NEQAS for H&I Director: Deborah Pritchard Operations Manager: Amy De'Ath Deputy Manager: Melanie Bartley Healthcare Scientist Practitioner: Geraint Clarke QA Officer: Jack Jefferies

MLA: Susan Davies



Pictured above (*left to right*): Former Manager Susan Corbin, Deborah Pritchard, Tracey Rees, Melanie Bartley, Amy De'Ath, Geraint Clarke and Jack Jefferies

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#### Scheme Fees for 2024-25

There will be a slight increase in fees for this distribution cycle. We are facing higher inflation and increased costs. We strive to provide a high-quality service with additional benefits that participant's value, including free educational schemes, webinars and access to experts in the field whilst operating in economically challenging conditions. UK NEQAS for H&I has absorbed some price increasing costs by making savings elsewhere using various improvement initiatives, sourcing competitive pricing for consumables. This has meant UK NEQAS for H&I has only had to increase our fees very moderately for 2024.

We would like to reiterate to our customers that we operate on a notfor profit basis and will always provide our services at the lowest price we can whilst maintaining operations.

Please remember that all invoices must be paid in <u>UK STERLING (GBP</u> <u>- £) AND FREE OF ALL BANK CHARGES.</u> We are experiencing more invoices being paid in a foreign currency resulting in outstanding balances being left on accounts. An administration fee will be payable if invoices must be re-issued. Outstanding balances will result in suspension from all services until your account balance is cleared.

#### **New Director**

UK NEQAS for H&I are pleased to welcome our new Director, Deborah Pritchard to the role. Deborah will be very familiar to you as she has worked as both the Manager and Deputy Director since 2013. Deborah succeeds Dr Tracey Rees who retired after providing support and guidance to the service as Director since 2013 and after working in the NHS for over 40 years!





UK NEQAS for H&I will be attending the 37<sup>th</sup> EFI Conference from the 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland. The theme for the conference is unveiling diversity, nurturing bonds and orchestrating immunity.

Deborah and Amy will be available throughout the Conference. Please come and say hello!

#### **Annual Participants' Meeting**

UK NEQAS for H&I host a participant meeting annually which allows us to feedback on performance over the previous year, highlight any issues or interesting trends and to inform participants of any changes for the upcoming distribution year. It also allows us to have open discussions on relevant topics and gives our participants a forum to raise concerns or ideas for improvements. We invite guest speakers to cover relevant scientific content and make the day as interactive as possible.



Join us on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at Aston Conference Centre in Birmingham, UK.

We will also be providing a second meeting for rest of worldbased labs using an online format (date to be confirmed). This meeting will be recorded and made available on our website.

### 2. Scheme Updates for 2024-25

Please refer to the Participant Manual for full scheme information. It is available to download from our website www.uknegashandi.org.uk.

#### New for 2024-25

In Scheme 4A2 – HLA Typing to 3<sup>rd</sup> Field laboratories reporting cis/trans ambiguities will be penalised.

In Scheme 8 – HLA Genotyping for Coeliac and other HLA Associated Diseases we have added the option to report HLA genotypes for one additional pharmacogenetic reactions. For the drug Tebentafusp which is used to treat patients with unresectable or metastatic uveal melanoma who test positive for HLA-A\*02:01.

In Scheme 11 – HPA Antibody Detection and Specification you will now have the option to be assessed for specific HPA antibodies only.



#### **Scheme 3 Reminder**

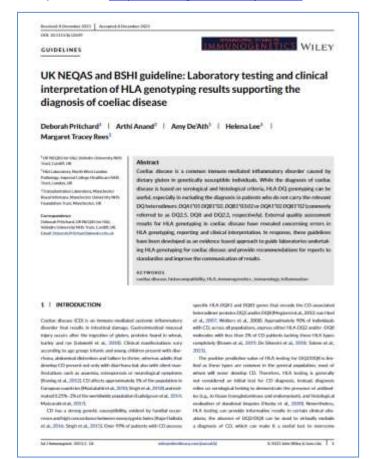
Since 2021 participants of Scheme 3 have had the option to select whether they would like report antibodies specificities at HLA-DQA and / or HLA-DPA. Participants are encouraged to submit antibody results for assessment at HLA-DQA and HLA-DPA.

Follow us on social media for the latest updates and news!



## **3. Coeliac Disease Guidelines**

The UK NEQAS for H&I and British Society for Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics (BSHI) guideline on laboratory testing of HLA genotyping results in the diagnosis of coeliac disease have been published: <u>http://doi.org/10.1111/iji.12649</u>



These guidelines were developed by UK NEQAS for H&I in response to the error rate noted in reporting of HLA typing results in relation to the diagnosis of Coeliac Disease. The hope is that these guidelines provide an evidence-based approach to guide laboratories undertaking HLA genotyping for Coeliac Disease and provide recommendations for reports to standardise and improve the communication of patient results to Clinicians.

Pritchard D, Anand A, De'Ath A, Lee H, Rees MT. UK NEQAS and BSHI guideline: Laboratory testing and clinical interpretation of HLA genotyping results supporting the diagnosis of coeliac disease. Int J Immunogenet. 2024 Jan;51 Suppl 1:3-20. doi: 10.1111/iji.12649. Epub 2023 Dec 28. PMID: 38153308.

#### 4. Participant Survey Response

UK NEQAS for UK&I asked for your feedback on our services over the last two years. We would like to thank all those that generously gave their time to complete the survey. We use the responses to inform our service development. You said we offered a great service and were very responsive to communications!

The survey highlighted a number of areas for consideration including:

- Sample Frequency The majority of participants rated the frequency of samples as 'just right' but some participants would like more samples less frequently. This issue has been frequently discussed at SC meetings and the Committee position remains that more frequent sampling is most representative of laboratory performance.
- Awareness of our Steering Committee many of you commented you were unaware of the role of our Steering Committee. We hope you will see them more during our Webinar series and there is also information on our website https://ukneqashandi.org.uk/steering-commitee/.
- Sample delivery delays A number of labs have experienced delays in getting samples after the changes imposed after Brexit. We have already implemented a number of changes to improve the situation such as using new customs paperwork and working with the NEQAS Logistics group to expedite delivery. This has had some success. We are continuing to monitor the delivery times to labs and will review the data which will highlight issues with particular destinations so we can concentrate on finding a solution.
- Value for money As costs rise with inflation fees will have to mirror any increases. Wherever possible we also look to implement efficient working practices and make savings on consumables to avoid passing increases in costs of running the service to participants. We would like to reiterate that we operate on a not-for-profit basis.

## 5. Portal Functionality – Did you know !?

Did you know you can download result summaries to Excel and view a summary of methodology from all participants in a Scheme?

- Click on Reports and Performance Tables to access the results summaries.
- Click on the relevant scheme and sample number to view detailed results for that sample.
- Your laboratory's result will be highlighted by a dashed line box. Note the assigned lab number (which will be different from your lab reference number and can vary annually) if you plan to download the results.
- To download a copy of the results and methods in .xlsx format (i.e. for viewing in Microsoft Excel), click the Download Results File button at the bottom of the page. Methodology information will also be downloaded simultaneously into a separate tab in the document.

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Did you know you can only enter methods once a year for each scheme?

- If method information has previously been entered it will be displayed. Review the information and update any answers in line with your laboratories testing.
- Use the Next button to progress through the method questions. Click Continue to Results to save the entered/updated method information.
- Use the Skip Methods and Continue to Result Entry button if the method information has already been reviewed (e.g. for subsequent samples in a distribution) to progress directly to the result entry pages.