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July 2020 UPDATEv2

Dear participant,

### **UK NEQAS Haematology services during the Covid-19 emergency UPDATE**

UK NEQAS Haematology amended services during the Covid-19 pandemic with the objectives of maintaining core services, supporting participants and minimising the risk to our staff. We focused on the high throughput, automated tests and those programmes that support the UK national screening programmes.

#### **Amendments to distribution schedules**

Our distribution schedules for the coming months are summarised below. There are adjustments to catch up with some distributions deferred from April – May (marked \*). We continue to experience some minor disruptions to the supply of materials and some surveys may be reduced in scope or complexity. These changes will be kept under review and the most up-to-date schedules and information are available on our website ([www.ukneqash.org](http://www.ukneqash.org)).

- July 2020:**
- FBC, Retics, NRBC and G6PD as scheduled
  - Blood Films for Morphology\*, Differential\* and Parasites\*
  - RDT Malaria\*
  - Newborn Sickle Screening as scheduled
  - Hb only, Plasma viscosity as scheduled
- August 2020:**
- FBC and ADLC as scheduled
  - Blood Films for Morphology as scheduled
  - Abnormal Haemoglobins as scheduled (no LN specimens)
  - Newborn Sickle Screening as scheduled
  - Hb only, Plasma viscosity as scheduled
- Sept 2020:**
- FBC, Retics, G6PD and ESR as scheduled
  - Blood Films for Morphology and Manual Differential as scheduled
  - Blood Films for Parasites\*
  - RDT Malaria\*
  - Newborn Sickle Screening as scheduled
  - Hb only, Plasma Viscosity as scheduled

#### **Handling UK NEQAS Haematology specimen packages**

Our specimens are prepared and packed in facilities that do not process patients' samples. The material is either commercially produced or prepared in-house from blood for transfusion. Blood films and dried blood spots (dbs) are from our libraries of cases prepared before the Covid-19 pandemic. With the exception of blood films and dbs, the specimens may be cleaned on receipt in the same way as patients' samples. Specimen packages should be handled with the same precautions as all other goods received in the post room and laboratory.

#### **Amendments to deadlines for return of results**

The extensions to closing dates implemented between April – June 2020 will be removed from July, as the majority of participating laboratories are now able to return in time. We understand that there may be some localised ongoing problems with delivery and testing and we will take those into account if you keep us informed of any issues. We wish to avoid penalising any participant for circumstances beyond their control. If you are unable to return results, you can avoid a non-participation penalty by submitting a 'blank' return, i.e. one without any data but with the reason in the general comments box.

**Amendment to reporting and performance monitoring**

We do not anticipate any planned delays to reporting and performance monitoring.

**Amendment to the Parasitology Teaching Day provision**

The Parasitology Teaching Day is offered in collaboration with UK NEQAS Parasitology. The Teaching Days rely on the availability of University teaching laboratories, many of which have been closed during the pandemic. Some regional teaching sessions have been cancelled. UK NEQAS Parasitology has developed plans to provide teaching using online facilities where face-to-face instruction remains impracticable. Further information can be found on our website ([www.ukneqash.org](http://www.ukneqash.org)).

**Cancellation of the UK NEQAS Annual Participants' meeting 2020**

We regret that as a result of the continued need for social distancing and uncertainties about travel restrictions, we have cancelled the UK NEQAS Haematology Annual Participants' meeting scheduled for October 2020. Any prepaid places will automatically be transferred to next year's meeting, which will be held in Liverpool in October 2021. We hope to hold online workshop and webinar style educational events in the early part of 2021 as a benefit of membership, in place of the cancelled meeting.

**Contacting UK NEQAS Haematology**

In compliance with the UK Government's advice on social distancing in the workplace, some of our team continues to work from home. Where possible, we ask that you use email ([gadmin@ukneqas.org.uk](mailto:gadmin@ukneqas.org.uk) for administrative queries and [haem@ukneqas.org.uk](mailto:haem@ukneqas.org.uk) for scientific queries).

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Keep safe.

With best regards,



**Barbara De la Salle, PhD**  
**Director, UK NEQAS Haematology**