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### Re-registration 2021/22

It's time to re-register so that we can make sure that you receive the EQA services you require without interruption and that the invoice for our services is accurate.

All documents relating to re-registration have been distributed electronically, so the only notification you will receive is the email with instructions for logging-in and details for re-registering.

The web-pages allow you to create, deactivate, or change details for key contacts. It is essential that we have a single main contact and an invoice contact; a consultant contact is also required for clinical laboratories in the UK. The main contact address is used for delivery of samples so please ensure the address provided matches the delivery address. You can also add other contacts so that lab staff receive notification emails when samples are despatched (trial contact) or when reports are issued (report contact). Please ensure you inactivate contacts who no longer work for your organisation, otherwise they may still be able enter data and access your reports, especially as emails are now re-used at other NHS trusts.

Even if there are no changes, please take a few moments to check that your details are correct. A change to the delivery (main contact) address will be applied from the first distribution of the 2021/22 schedule, but all other contact detail changes will take effect immediately.

You can register on the same page for all BTLP schemes for which you are the main contact, including Pre-transfusion Testing (E and R exercises), FMH, ABO Titration, DAT, Red Cell Genotyping, and the pilot schemes for Extended Red Cell Phenotyping and Antenatal Titration, and also for TACT. This will give you a single quote and a single invoice. Refer to page 4 for further information regarding annual meeting pre-paid places.

We are intending to phase out the use of G and T numbers that are used for some participants of the ABO Titration and Red Cell Genotyping schemes. You may be asked if you want to merge your existing G/T number with a number you use for other schemes or we will provide you with a new number.

There has been a small increase to the prices (around 3%) for 2021/22 for the full schemes to cover inflation and increasing overheads; the FMH scheme has seen a greater increase (15%) to reflect a significant increase in the cost of the cord material.

We appreciate your participation in our schemes, and if you need any assistance with the re-registration process or information on our services, please contact our Administration Team by phone on +44 1923 217933 or email using [btlpadmin@ukneqas.org.uk](mailto:btlpadmin@ukneqas.org.uk).

### Update on BTLP Staffing

In 2020 we saw the departure of the Scheme Director Jenny White, after more than 20 years at UK NEQAS, who left to become the Executive Director of the International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT). Richard Haggas took over as sole Director in March 2020 with Katy Veale fully taking over the role as Operational Manager. Dipika Shah joined the BTLP team as a Senior EQA Scientist in March 2020.

### COVID-19 and UK NEQAS BTLP

As for all of our participants, the COVID pandemic has caused some significant disruptions to UK NEQAS BTLP, but with the exception of the FMH we managed to distribute all other exercise material. This was done even with a skeleton number of staff working on site during the initial phase of the pandemic. Unfortunately our reduced staffing has meant that some of the other work we had planned to do this year had to be shelved. Our hope is that with the vaccination programme taking place at the moment we may be able to look at some of these other pieces of work later in the year.

## Update on BTLP Schemes

UK NEQAS BTLP remains ISO 17043 accredited for PTT, FMH and ABOT schemes and an assessment was scheduled for February 2021.

### Pre-transfusion Testing (PTT)

2020 saw no major changes to the PTT schemes. As a result of the COVID pandemic we extended the closing dates for the 'E' exercises during April, June and July to give all laboratories a chance to submit their results.

We intend to send out a practice questionnaire for UK and ROI participants in 2021/22.

### Fetomaternal Haemorrhage (FMH)

2020 has proved to be a difficult one for the FMH programme. We were unable to obtain any cord material for exercises 2003F and 2004F so both distributions had to be cancelled. We have sent out an additional sample with the last three exercises (2005F, 2006F and 2101F) and plan to do the same with 2102F to make up for the previous missing samples and to ensure normal levels of performance monitoring for the whole year.

### ABO Titration (ABOT)

The ABOT Scheme continues to provide monitoring of ABO titration as part of supporting ABO incompatible renal transplants. The scheme is also used by other laboratories supporting other ABO mismatched transplant programmes (liver, haemopoietic stem cell transplants etc).

### Direct Antiglobulin Test (DAT)

We have completed a successful validation of the scoring system for the DAT scheme and performance monitoring of this scheme began in November 2020.

We have applied to UKAS for an 'extension to scope' to achieve accreditation to ISO17043 for the DAT scheme.

Unfortunately due to the amount of material available for the DAT scheme we are reaching the maximum number of participants that we can supply. If you wish to register for the scheme please contact us by emailing [btlp@uknegas.org.uk](mailto:btlp@uknegas.org.uk). In 2021 we will look at whether it is possible to obtain more material for the DAT.

### Red cell Genotyping (RCG)

The RCG scheme assesses genotype and predicted phenotype for a range of blood groups four times a year. Two 'patient' whole blood samples are provided for D C,c,E,e, Kk, Fy<sup>a</sup> Fy<sup>b</sup>, Fy Jk<sup>a</sup> Jk<sup>b</sup>, MN, Ss, Do<sup>a</sup>, Do<sup>b</sup> typing.

It had been intended to transition the RCG scheme to a scored scheme in 2020. Unfortunately due to some issues with the reporting and scoring of *RHD variants* we are revisiting the scoring of *RHD* genotypes and have postponed the move to a full scheme. We intend to complete this work in the 2021/22 cycle of exercises.

## Point of Care Testing - D typing

UK NEQAS BTLP runs a D typing scheme for users performing D typing in non-laboratory areas where the results are used to determine whether anti-D prophylaxis Ig is indicated. There are four exercises per year and each exercise includes three whole blood samples for D typing. For more information please contact the scheme.

## BTLP Pilot Schemes

### Antenatal Antibody Titration (ANT)

There are 4 exercises per year, distributed with 4 of the 6 PTT 'E' exercises. At least one 'patient' plasma sample is provided for titration each time, and extra information collected on the follow-up undertaken if similar result were to be obtained in clinical practice.

<https://www.ukneqasbtlp.org/btlp.php>

### Extended Red Cell Phenotyping (ERP)

The ERP pilot scheme assesses phenotyping for a range of common antigens four times a year.

Two 'patient' red cell samples (in Alsever's) are provided for D C,c,E,e, Kk, Fy<sup>a</sup> Fy<sup>b</sup>, Jk<sup>a</sup> Jk<sup>b</sup>, MN, Ss phenotyping.

<https://www.ukneqasbtlp.org/btlp.php>

**All pilot schemes are open to UK and non-UK laboratories; it is easy to join during on-line re-registration. For more details of these pilots, go to [www.ukneqasbtlp.org](http://www.ukneqasbtlp.org) or contact us via [btlp@ukneqas.org.uk](mailto:btlp@ukneqas.org.uk)**

## Location of UK NEQAS BTLP

UK NEQAS BTLP is currently hosted together with UK NEQAS haematology by West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust on their Watford General Hospital site.

As a consequence of the need to redevelop the site for a new hospital, the building we currently occupy is scheduled for demolition in early 2022. UK NEQAS will be moving to an off-site location at some point in 2021.

## Training Assessment and Competency Tool (TACT)

The continuing aim of this system is to provide laboratory staff and managers with an interactive knowledge-based training and competency assessment tool; helping to monitor theoretical knowledge of Biomedical Scientists working in blood transfusion laboratories. Currently, TACT features a single scenario, based on routine request handling, representing a typical request received in a hospital blood transfusion laboratory, but we have plans to expand upon the current system iteration to bring you a second scenario type.

Further developments originally scheduled for introduction in 2020 including introduction of plasma components, a group-check sample, crossmatching, and abbreviated blood grouping, had to be postponed as a result of the COVID pandemic.

If you would like the fees for TACT membership to be added to your BTLP re-registration fees, the re-registration website has a field for you to enter how many staff TACT memberships and how many managerial memberships you would like for the next financial year.

There are updates, announcements and requests for feedback on TACT by email and on our Facebook page and Twitter feed, so please make sure you 'like' and follow!

**Comprehensive user guide at:-**  
<http://www.ukneqasbtlp.org>

**Subscribe at any time at:-**  
<http://tact.ukneqasbtlp.org.uk>

## Scheme committees and meetings

### BTLP Steering Committee

The UK NEQAS Steering Committee for BTLP is a professional group that advises the schemes, and operates according to guidelines and terms of reference produced by the UK NEQAS organisation. The composition of this committee reflects the different professional groups and national organisations involved in delivering blood transfusion services to patients in the UK.

Members serve for 3 years and travel expenses are reimbursed by the UK NEQAS organisation. The Committee meets 3 times a year usually in London, and the committee helps to plan and organise the annual participants' meeting. In 2020 all meetings were and continue to be held virtually via Zoom.

The Steering Committee has an overview of all the BTLP schemes and pilot schemes, but the main focus is on the PTT and DAT schemes, as the other schemes and pilots have scientific advisory groups. Issues such as supply of material for EQA, the relevance and design of the schemes in the context of new national initiatives / guidelines are covered, and proposed new developments are reviewed. Changes in local practice that committee members may be aware of are discussed, and the committee advises the scheme on issues raised by participants.

### Scientific Advisory Groups

Scientific Advisory Groups (SAGs) are in place to monitor and advise the other BTLP schemes. There are three SAGs overseeing FMH, ABOT / ANT and RCG / ERP, and all report to the BTLP Steering Committee, so if you have expertise and a special interest in any of these areas...

### ...Getting involved....

We really appreciate the work of our committee members, and it is a great way to get involved, so if you are interested in joining the Steering Committee or SAGs please contact either Richard Haggas (Scheme Director) or Katy Veale (Operational Manager) to discuss informally.

If you do decide to apply we'll need a CV, a supporting letter from a professional referee and a supporting statement from the employer agreeing to release the applicant to attend meetings.

Replacement of Steering Committee and SAG members is a continuous but informal process and a vacancy that matches the expertise, professional group and UK region may not be immediately available, but we will keep all applications on record.

### Annual Meetings 2020 and 2021

The 2020 meeting due held at the NEC in November was postponed to November 2021 following the COVID pandemic.

In November 2020, on the date originally intended for the meeting, UK NEQAS BTLP ran a 'Scheme Update' webinar, delivered via Zoom. This was provided free of charge to both UK and overseas participants and saw more than 300 people register and attend. Feedback from those attending indicated that the webinar was well received and we will look at the feasibility of hosting another one during 2021.

A recording of the 2020 Webinar is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/Ej9SYxBTOOI>

### Date for the diary....

We are intending to hold an annual meeting with the BBTS Blood Bank Technology SIG in the West Midlands at the NEC Birmingham on 23 November - preliminary programme to follow.



UK laboratories that registered for the 2020 meeting will have their registrations transferred to the 2021 meeting. In view of the ongoing pandemic, we are not accepting any additional pre-registrations for the 2021 meeting. Those not currently registered will have the opportunity to register when the BBTS website is open for registration in July 2021.

We realise that not everyone has the opportunity to attend the meeting due to cost and work pressures, and if you would like us to take part in a local 'technical discussion group' meeting to give a presentation or just be there to answer questions related to the BTLP EQA schemes and issues highlighted by the exercises, please contact us and we will do our best to be there or join you virtually depending on the circumstances.