

## **EQA for Point of Care Testing (POCT)**

National Guidelines<sup>1</sup> for safe and effective management and use of POCT in primary and community care state that:

- Quality assurance is key to the delivery of POCT as it ensures that the results generated are accurate and reliable. **Internal quality control (IQC)** is where a control sample is tested to ensure that the device is performing within certain defined specifications on a daily basis.
- POCT providers should participate in **External Quality Assessment (EQA)** Schemes, where this process enables POCT service providers to determine how their device is performing compared to similar devices across other Primary and Community Care sites.
- As needed, advice should be sought from a source with relevant expertise and quality assurance structures such as the manufacturer, their authorised representative or the local hospital lab.

Further guidance for pharmacies<sup>2</sup> from the PSI include the need for:

- Robust quality assurance systems, including self-audit.
- Pharmacists should consider liaising with an accredited clinical laboratory as a source of advice and support.
- Records of all quality assurance measures should be retained in the pharmacy.
- IQC testing should take place at appropriate intervals and test results should be documented.

Both guidelines suggest The Irish External Quality Assessment Scheme (IEQAS) as an EQA Provider.

### **IQC vs EQA?**

- IQC is tested on a sample with a known target value; EQA is performed on a variety of unknown test samples
- IQC assesses performance of analysis from day to day; EQA assesses performance of analysis relative to other testing sites

### **IEQAS**

IEQAS was established in 1981 and is a not-for-profit national EQA scheme provider.

IEQAS offers over 150 EQA schemes, either independently or in collaboration with our partner Labquality in Finland.

IEQAS is overseen by a Steering Committee, with nominees from the major professional bodies involved in laboratory medicine in Ireland:

- Academy of Clinical Science and Laboratory Medicine
- The Association of Clinical Biochemists in Ireland
- Faculty of Pathology, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland

### **IEQAS POCT Schemes**

Samples are posted 4 times/year at regular intervals and we recommend that all trained operators should participate in the EQA process.

Reports are confidential.

Safe handling and disposal of any surplus material is the responsibility of the recipient.

### **IEQAS Operations Team**

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### **References**

<sup>1</sup>Guidelines for Safe and Effective Management and Use of Point of Care Testing in Primary and Community Care (2009)

<sup>2</sup>Guidance on the Provision of Testing Services in Pharmacies (2014); Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland

IEQAS website [www.ieqas.ie](http://www.ieqas.ie) provides further information.