

PARASITOLOGY

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Implementing an inter-laboratory exchange program for parasitology: Improving quality and strengthening links between two national diagnostic centersMichael J Coyne¹, L Connelly¹, J Jones², B L Jones¹ and C L Alexander¹¹Glasgow Royal Infirmary, UK²Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK

Quality Assurance (QA) schemes are an essential requirement for accredited diagnostic laboratories, ensuring confidence in the tests performed. The Scottish Parasite Diagnostic and Reference Laboratory (SPDRL) subscribe to a wide range of QA schemes including UK NEQAS, molecular testing schemes for *Cryptosporidium* and *Plasmodium* species and an in-house internal quality assurance scheme (IQA). The UK NEQAS offer a broad range of parasitology schemes that SPDRL subscribe to; however no formal schemes exist for a small number of essential parasitology tests. In order to ensure quality is maintained in all areas of testing, an exchange scheme was established between SPDRL and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) in October 2014. This includes tests not covered in any other scheme available in the UK. The schedule includes three additional serological tests (*Trypanosoma brucei gambiense* IgG, *Leishmania* IgG, *Fasciola* IgG), one fecal antigen test (*E. histolytica* adhesin) and recently introduced assays for the molecular detection of *Leishmania* DNA. The scheme has been in operation for 18 months with each site alternating between issuing samples for testing on a monthly basis. The scheme has been beneficial in a number of ways: It has helped to satisfy the quality requirements of our accreditation bodies and has contributed to the consolidation of links between both centers, facilitating further collaboration such as the validation of new methodologies and the sharing of rarer sample material. This has been a very positive experience and we aim to continue to encourage this scheme to promote excellence, further collaborations and sharing of expertise.

Biography

Michael J Coyne is currently a Lab Manager at SPDRL, where he has been based since 2007. He is also an IT Manager at Scottish Microbiology Reference Laboratories, Glasgow and has a keen interest in systems development. His recent publications include *C. hominis* diversity in Scotland and Acanthamoeba keratitis diagnosis.

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