

**Microbiology Expert Committee (MEC)  
Meeting Summary**

**May 31, 2018**

1. Roll Call and Minutes:

Robin Cook, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:35pm Eastern on May 31, 2018 by teleconference. Attendance is recorded in Attachment A – there were 6 members present. Associate Members: Mary Robinson, Carl Kircher, and Jennifer Best, Guest: Dan Hickman.

2. Method Code Issue

Robin reviewed the minutes from the last two meetings to bring people up to date. She sent the minutes to Dan Hickman for review too.

Robin commented that perhaps the Scope should be a discussion of the TNI method codes in order to make this more manageable. The Committee needs to determine who uses them and for what purpose. She realizes there is still the issue that SDWIS (EPA) is not using the TNI codes.

Dan prepared a list of the current TNI method codes and Robin shared this on screen with the Committee using Webex. These are used for PTs and Certification Processes. Dan noted that the TNI method codes is a separate discussion than SDWIS and CMDP method codes. Jerry is in discussion with EPA on this. Dan is not involved in this at this point.

Dan's goal is to reduce the complexity of the method codes. Dan adds a method code if it appears in the Federal Register. If a method is listed differently (a different edition or version number) it will get a separate code. That is why there are so many method codes. He commented that Clean Water (CW) and Drinking Water (DW) will only be using dates moving forward. The bad news is the old method references won't always go away. Jennifer noted that DW is not in the same place as CW, but it is the goal. EPA would need to retire the old codes for Dan to remove them from the TNI method codes list.

Jennifer commented that Jerry told her that the NELAP ABs wanted as much detail as possible in the codes and it seems like this Committee wants less detail to reduce the number of method codes.

Previously it was determined that the micro methods needed to be split depending on what media was used. Labs need to do a PT for each different media they are reporting. In the TNI database, the organisms become the analyte. Dan's original question was whether each of the listed methods could be brought back to a single method.

Dan is not a microbiologist, but it looks to him that things are more complicated than they need to be. If the group determines that there really do need to be separate method codes for different media ... then this is what will be left in place.

Robin is playing devil's advocate. Choose the IC – 300.1. She is looking at Nitrite, Nitrate and Bromate. When she reports those on IC, is she reporting a separate method code for each of those analytes? Dan said no. The method codes are independent from the analyte codes. In micro the organism becomes the analyte.

In micro there are examples where the same method is being used and different "analytes" are being reported, but unlike the example above ... there are multiple method codes being reported.

Carl noted part of the issue is also that micro has a confirmed phase and a presumptive phase.

Dan gave another example in BNA analysis. You treat the sample differently to get different analytes out, but it is still a single method. You are not using different media. Carl commented that the base neutral is not distinguished from the acid extractable when determining method code. Dan sees that this example might be helpful when deciding what to do with micro. You are getting different types of analytes with different parts of the method, similar to a microbiologist using different media for different types of organisms with the same technical method.

Robin shared the TNI method codes on screen. Robin is asking why micro needs all the extra distinction. Why couldn't it work like the Chemistry methods discussed above? If the end goal is to see E. Coli, why do we care what media was used?

The SOPs let the lab auditors/assessors know the details used in the method. It doesn't have to be a detailed method code letting them know. Robin is questioning whether they are gaining anything as a regulated community by making this more complicated.

The labs and ABs are telling Dan there are too many method codes and it is too complicated. The ABs are the main driver on this. Dan is also working with WET to reduce their method codes.

Robin asked why could we couldn't remove the reference in the G portion to the media and just reduce it to the editions. That would cut the number of method codes in half. Carl commented that the question is too broad to answer specifically. There was general agreement with making this type of change by the people on the call.

Robin suggested that the change could be made and then present the changes to the NELAP AB and labs and get feedback. This could be a first step. Dan agreed this would be a good start.

Dan commented that if we do this, he will need to create a new method code for this change. Once all the ABs stop using the old method codes he will be able to remove them – archive them. It will get worse in the short term and better in the long term.

The work with SDWIS is beyond this committee and this is something TNI as a whole will need to get involved in. SDWIS is not including TNI method codes.

Dwayne added into the call and commented that there are methods that are used for presence/absence and enumeration and they are given different method codes. Do we get rid of the method code distinguishing this? This would happen at the analyte code level instead. This would also eliminate additional methods codes.

Jennifer thinks what is on the certificate in terms of the method code is very important. She does not think it should be made simpler. There are 50 different states doing it differently and the additional specificity makes reciprocity easier. It reduces liability. They are in a legal case where one state accredited a lab in another state without fully knowing what was going on. They need to know exactly what they gave a license/accreditation to a lab to do. She agrees with the concept of what is being talked about, but does not have enough faith in the assessments being done correctly. A lot of assessors don't do a good job with micro.

Dan said the change being discussed doesn't really lesson the specificity. It gives the method and the edition/reference being used.

Robin thinks different technologies could be given different method codes. Dan noted we are not talking about getting rid of the +G, we are talking about getting rid of the separation of media.

Jennifer asked if the NELAP AC could be polled. Robin noted that this is the purpose of the meeting being planned in New Orleans. Jennifer thinks the regions should be talked to also. Jennifer thinks the EPA wants as much specificity as possible, so it would be helpful to check with other EPA regions. Dan commented that it is only TNI that gives different method codes for the same method for separate media. Dan would like to stop doing this. Jennifer said EPA does it also in SDWIS.

Jennifer would think that TNI would want as much in common with SDWIS as possible. It is hard for her to get used to the idea of reducing specificity.

Dwayne suggested that one method could be chosen from the current codes and the group could look at reducing the number of codes for the one method and then get feedback on the changes that were made. If the response is favorable, then more methods could be done. Dan suggested doing this for 2 or 3 methods instead of one.

Jennifer asked what happens if the lab is running the wrong method? The assessments are only every 2 years. There would be 2 years of non-compliant data. And if the lab fails a

PT, what exact method were they using that failed? Dan noted that this would all be in the lab's SOPs. Jennifer thinks a more specific method code would be a second check.

Dan noted that a lab can list any method when they report their PT. None of this can be checked until the onsite where SOPs are reviewed and data can be looked at.

Carl asked that a proposal be prepared for the ABs to look at. He doesn't have a problem with all the 400+ method codes, but is willing to be objective and look at a proposal. Jennifer asked that Carl think about how reciprocity would work without more specific method codes.

Robin suggested preparing a table with the proposed method codes and look at it compared to the current method codes. Get comments at the meeting. If they can't support it, it may be a showstopper. They may have suggestions for improvement and this would give the committee direction to move forward. We need to be sure to invite Jennifer, regions, NELAP AC and Dan Hickman to the meeting in New Orleans.

Jennifer suggested that the Committee look at all the methods in the database for Micro and figure out how many codes it would eliminate with the proposed change verses just looking for things that are wrong or redundant. How important is it to have less method codes? Dan said people complain it is too hard to pick all the right ones. There are just too many options.

Robin noted that in Florida a lab has to submit the SOPs with the PT results to add a method or analyte. The AB can look at the SOP to know exactly what the lab is doing.

The numbers of method codes in SDWIS are 12 pages small font.

Robin suggested the following methods be used:

- Kasey - 9215 (3 media, 5 editions).
- Robin - 9222B and D (there are about 37 options for 8222B now).
- Dwayne – 9223

This work can be reviewed at the next meeting. Kasey, Robin and Dwayne should send the work to the Committee by email prior to the next meeting.

This will be put in front of everyone at the lunch meeting for comment. She thinks a proposal will encourage more conversation.

Ilona confirmed that a phone has been requested for the meeting and the lunch meeting is scheduled for Thursday. Robin will let Ilona know by the first week in July if a phone is not needed.

### 3. Action Items

A summary of action items can be found in Attachment B. The action items were reviewed and updated in the table.

### 4. New Business

None.

### 5. Next Meeting and Close

The next meeting will be held by teleconference on June 12, 2018 at 1:30pm Eastern.  
*(Addition: Meeting rescheduled to June 19, 2018 at 1:30pm Eastern.)*

A summary of action items and backburner/reminder items can be found in Attachment B and C.

Robin adjourned the meeting at 3:01 pm Eastern.

**Attachment A  
Participants  
Microbiology Expert Committee (MEC)**

| <b>Members</b>   | <b>Affiliation</b>                       | <b>Balance</b> | <b>Contact Information</b>   |
|--|--|----------------|--|
| Robin Cook<br>(Chair) (2019)<br><b>Present</b>             | City of Daytona Beach<br>EML             | Lab            | <a href="mailto:cookr@codb.us">cookr@codb.us</a>   |
| Patsy Root<br>(2019)<br><b>Absent</b>                      | IDEXX Laboratories,<br>Inc               | Other          | <a href="mailto:patsy-root@idexx.com">patsy-root@idexx.com</a>                             |
| Lew Denny<br>(2021*)<br><b>Absent</b>                      | Flowers Chemical<br>Laboratories – North | Lab            | <a href="mailto:lewdenny@comcast.net">lewdenny@comcast.net</a>                             |
| Jessica Hoch<br>(2019*)<br><b>Absent</b>                   | TCEQ                                     | AB             | <a href="mailto:Jessica.hoch@tceq.texas.gov">Jessica.hoch@tceq.texas.gov</a>               |
| Deb Waller<br>(2019)<br><b>Absent</b>                      | NJ DEP                                   | AB             | <a href="mailto:debra.waller@dep.nj.gov">debra.waller@dep.nj.gov</a>                       |
| Dwayne Burkholder<br>(2019)<br><b>Present - late</b>       | Pennsylvania DEP                         | AB             | <a href="mailto:dburkholde@pa.gov">dburkholde@pa.gov</a>                                   |
| Michael Blades<br>(2021*)<br><b>Present</b>                | ERA                                      | Other          | <a href="mailto:mblades@eraqc.com">mblades@eraqc.com</a>                                   |
| Brad Stawick<br>(2019*)<br><b>Absent</b>                   |  | Lab            | <a href="mailto:Brad.stawick@stawicklabbmgmt.com">Brad.stawick@stawicklabbmgmt.com</a>     |
| Kasey Raley<br>(Vice-chair) (2020*)<br><b>Present</b>      | Eurofins Eaton<br>Analytical, Inc.       | Lab            | <a href="mailto:KaseyRaley@eurofinsUS.com">KaseyRaley@eurofinsUS.com</a>                   |
| Vanessa Soto Contreras<br>(2020*)<br><b>Present</b>        | Florida DOH                              | AB             | <a href="mailto:Vanessa.SotoContreras@flhealth.gov">Vanessa.SotoContreras@flhealth.gov</a> |
| Gary Yakub<br>(2020)<br><b>Absent</b>                      | Environmental<br>Standards, Inc.         | Other          | <a href="mailto:gyakub@envstd.com">gyakub@envstd.com</a>                                   |
| Enoma Omoregie<br>(2021*)<br><b>Present</b>                | NYCDEP                                   | Other          | <a href="mailto:eomoregie@health.nyc.gov">eomoregie@health.nyc.gov</a>                     |
| Christabel Monteiro<br>(2021*)<br><b>Absent</b>            | ESC                                      | Lab            | <a href="mailto:cmonteiro@esclabsciences.com">cmonteiro@esclabsciences.com</a>             |
| Ilona Taunton<br>(Program Administrator)<br><b>Present</b> | The NELAC Institute                      | n/a            | <a href="mailto:Ilona.taunton@nelac-institute.org">Ilona.taunton@nelac-institute.org</a>   |

**Attachment B**

**Action Items – MEC**

|    | <b>Action Item</b>  | <b>Who</b>              | <b>Expected Completion</b> | <b>Actual Completion</b> |
|----|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1  | Review Method codes and send comments to Robin for Dan Hickman.   | Deb                     | TBD                        |                          |
| 19 | Provide EPA interpretation on temperature readings to Ilona. She will have it posted on the website.          | Robin                   | 1/31/14                    |                          |
| 74 | Send questions for ABs regarding method codes to Robin.   | ALL                     | 3/15/18                    |                          |
| 76 | Provide an update on what has been done with the databases after Jennifer's review and internal EPA meetings. | Jennifer                | 4/10/18                    |                          |
| 77 | TNI send LAMS information and list of NELAP ABs to Deric.   | Ilona                   | 3/31/18                    | Complete.<br>Jerry sent. |
| 78 | Forward link to PDFs on DW website with rule, method and analyte information.                                 | Jennifer                | 3/31/18                    |                          |
| 79 | Work on method code list for 9222B and D, 9215 and 9223 and send to committee before next meeting.            | Robin, Kasey and Dwayne | 6/12/18                    |                          |
|    |   |                         |                            |                          |

