

## **Minutes, PT Frequency Subcommittee**

DATE: May 23, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. EDT

Subcommittee members in attendance (6): D Tholen (chair), R Haynes, C Wibby, M Karapondo, J Lowry, J Morgan

Guest, ex officio: K McCracken: Chairman PT Committee

Associate member: J Flowers

Subcommittee members absent (2): G Dechant, R Kirimi

Dan Tholen opened the meeting and thanked the members for their time.

Four documents had been distributed prior to the meeting:

- The Subcommittee Charter approved by the PT Expert Committee.
- Draft minutes from May 9 teleconference, including an Annex with study proposals.
- The proposed design for a study of data from New Jersey laboratories.
- A proposed agenda (distributed by e-mail, Annex 1).

1. The proposed agenda was approved without revision.
2. The minutes of the May 9 meeting were approved with a correction to the spelling of Michella Karapondo's name. Mr. Tholen also noted that all subcommittee meetings will be open to any TNI member who requests Associate status. Associate members will also receive all subcommittee correspondence.
3. The proposed study of data from New Jersey was discussed. The subcommittee agreed that the data set for study will be carefully screened for appropriate analytes to include in the study. These will include those analytes that have sufficient numbers of results in the "One per year" and "Two or more per year" groups. Any combinations of analytes (such as in a class of chemicals) will come from the analytes mentioned above, and will include only analytes that are on the NELAC tables. A third class of laboratories will also be investigated, although the numbers may be too small for meaningful comparison. These are laboratories that are required to participate once per year group but who actually take PT more than once per year. The subcommittee agreed that the proposed dependent (performance) measures will be used as proposed.

The study of New Jersey data will come entirely from the ERA database. If necessary, this may be expanded to include those few laboratories that participate in other programs. Subsequent studies of differences between the two groups (such as laboratories that participate only in PT for drinking water or DMR-QA) may require the cooperation of other PT providers. It was also agreed that we should investigate differences in performance in states where all laboratories must take two PT events per year (Florida and New York), and compare with states where some labs take PT once per year. This will require data from States, or from other PT providers.

The modified design is presented in Annex 2.

4. Proposed questions for Accrediting Bodies and Proficiency Test Providers.  
The general approach for questions to Abs and PT providers, as outlined in the previous minutes, was discussed and agreed to. The subcommittee agreed to add a question asking generally about other ideas from ABs concerning the requirements for PT. The study should include all States, not just NELAC states.

Judy Morgan completed a study opinions of ABs last year, and obtained good information from over 30 states. The questions were not the same as discussed by this subcommittee, but they are related. Judy agreed to distribute the results of this questionnaire (*Note, this was completed soon after the conference call*).

The subcommittee also discussed the proposed questions to ask PT providers. The general format was approved, but the subcommittee agreed that we should add questions on the number of laboratories in the special programs. There was also concern that some PT providers might mention the same program, so the subcommittee agreed to add questions about whether the client program is for more than one PT provider, and to name the program.

The revised designs for the questions for ABs and for PT providers is included in Annex 2.

5. Dan informed the subcommittee of the recommendation from ELAB that the subcommittee include the three ELAB working group chairholders as members. This came as a recommendation from the ELAB Chairman, Jim Pletl. The request came after the subcommittee members had been confirmed. This change would require an existing subcommittee member, Gary Dechant, to relinquish his member status to be replaced by the remaining ELAB work group chairholder. The subcommittee was informed that Gary was amenable to this change. Dan expressed his concern that the subcommittee's efforts are likely to become political rather than objective, and stated that if that is the case, he did not wish to serve as Chairman. Kirstin reminded the group that the Subcommittee Charter from the PT Expert Committee specifies subcommittee membership is at the discretion of the subcommittee Chair. Kirstin indicated that in her opinion the member status was somewhat arbitrary because this subcommittee is not making decisions to change the existing standard. She stated that the purpose of the subcommittee is to gather information and summarize information for the PT Committee. Kirstin also said that she believed there is ample opportunity to contribute to the activities of this group regardless of member status. After lengthy discussion the subcommittee agreed that the subcommittee membership would remain as it is for now but Kirstin will refer the issue to the PT Committee since the limit on membership for the subcommittee was established by the PT Committee as specified in the Charter; any revisions to the number of members would need to be approved by the PT Committee.

Next call June 6, 1:00pm EDT

The next call will include final agreement on analytes for study of New Jersey data – Jeff will provide the list of analytes in the two groups; the call will also lead to agreement on questions for ABs and PTPs, and volunteers to coordinate the questions. Questions can be distributed by e-mail, but volunteers will be needed for follow-up.

Dan agreed to prepare and distribute the minutes.

The meeting was dismissed at 2:25pm.

ANNEX 1

Agenda, PT Frequency Subcommittee  
May 23, 2008

1. Review of minutes
2. Proposal for study of data from NJ
3. Possibilities for other objective studies of existing data
4. Interview questions for AB's and PT providers
5. Subcommittee membership: (a) request for different representation from members of ELAB; (b) nominations for new subcommittee chairman.
6. Other business.

ANNEX 2  
Proposed Study design, revised

I. Design for study of labs w/ requirement for 1 vs. requirement for 2 events per year for all analytes.

1. NJ labs only. Most recent 3 years of data.
2. List of labs with requirements for 1 event per year vs. requirements for 2 events per year for all NELAC analytes.
3. List analytes according to number of labs in the smaller group (probably the group of laboratories where 2 events are required), by year, listing the number of labs that returned results for the analyte sometime each year.
4. Choose the analytes to study (to be agreed by subcommittee)
5. List percentage of unacceptable results by analyte, class, and overall for labs in each group.
6. List frequency of labs with repeated unacceptable results for an analyte (most recent 3 years).
7. Calculate average absolute z score (note,  $z > 5$  are made  $z = 5$ ) by analyte, class, overall.
8. Select laboratories in the 1/year group that participated in PT 2 or more times for an analyte.
9. Calculate percentage unacceptable and average z score for this subset.

Examine outcome statistics in the two groups (PT mandated 1/year vs. 2/year), by analyte, by chemical class, overall for each program, and overall.

Percentage unacceptable

Average absolute z score

Percentage repeated unacceptable

Examine also the above scores for the subset of 1/year labs who take PT 2+/year

II. Poll Accrediting Bodies.

- a. How do you currently use PT data to monitor performance?
- b. Do you have different monitoring criteria for NELAC and non-NELAC laboratories?
- c. What is the longest time a lab could be out of compliance before it would be detected by PT, with PT two times a year compared with once? (*note: may be calculated by subcommittee*)
- d. In your opinion, does a frequency of twice per year provide a better tool for assuring performance?
- e. Would reducing the frequency to once per year result in any of the following:
  - i. Lower the credibility of TNI accreditation?
  - ii. Improve the likelihood of my state adopting TNI criteria?
- f. Do you have any other opinions concerning an optimal design of PT requirements?

### III. Poll PT Providers

For programs that are mandated by clients other than states and are repeated more than once, please give the approximate numbers of programs that are in each of the cells for number of events per year and number of samples per event. For example: the PT programs of CAEAL (Canada) are 4 samples, two times a year.

Frequency	1 sample	2 samples	3+ samples	Total
≤1 per year				
2 per year				
≥3 per year				
Total				N

- a. Approximately how many laboratories are included in each of the client programs?
- b. Is the program an exclusive arrangement with your PT organization, or shared with others? If shared, please give the name of the client or specified program.
- c. Are there states or clients with different monitoring procedures that might be of interest to the subcommittee?