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Participation of DAIDS-sponsored CD4 laboratories in the UKNEQAS proficiency testing program

We are pleased that your flow cytometry laboratory will be performing CD4 measurements on samples from subjects enrolled in studies sponsored by the Division of AIDS (DAIDS) of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Disease of the National Institutes of Health.

We are also pleased that you are already participating in the CD4 proficiency testing program administered by the UK NEQAS.

The UK NEQAS collaborates closely with one of the contracts that DAIDS has – the Immunology Quality Assessment Program (IQA) at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina in the USA with Tom Denny as the Principal Investigator. The IQA is the provider of external proficiency testing panels to CD4 laboratories in the USA.

The terms of this collaboration include a reduction of 50% in participation costs for international DAIDS-funded CD4 laboratories, and access by the IQA to proficiency testing data provided by the laboratory to the UK NEQAS. The purpose of this access is to allow the IQA to note when there are difficulties in performance and provide assistance and training. This IQA/UK NEQAS collaboration is a global effort to raise the quality and standardize CD4 counting in the fight against HIV. The results of participation in the UK NEQAS external proficiency testing and efforts by the IQA to help should not be regarded as punitive.

The IQA will be receiving reports from UK NEQAS about your performance in the proficiency testing program and will be contacting you if there are difficulties. The IQA will work with you until such difficulties are resolved. There are many forms of help. It could be as little as an email exchange and a request to review your histograms, or as extensive as a visit from the IQA. The results of participation in the UK NEQAS external proficiency testing and efforts by the IQA to help should not be regarded as punitive. You may initiate contact with the IQA if you have any questions related to flow cytometry, even if it has nothing to do with CD4 proficiency testing. The international CD4 specialist at the IQA is John Wong and he can be contacted by phone at 001 919 681 4066 or by email at john.wong@duke.edu. You may also contact Raul Louzao, the IQA Manager, at 001 919 684 5861 or at raul.louzao@duke.edu. John and Raul are available to receive calls from 8:00am to 5:00pm US Eastern Standard Time. If there are questions regarding the UK NEQAS program such as requesting repeat specimens or clarification of the reports then please contact Liam Whitby by email at l.whitby@btconnect.com.

We are happy that you can participate in our studies and we thank you for doing so. We hope that your participation in the UK NEQAS proficiency testing and any benefits that you gain from assistance by the IQA will put your laboratory in a favorable position to participate in various research and health care efforts. If you have any question about our requirement to participate in the UK NEQAS CD4 proficiency testing program and be responsive to IQA's efforts to help, please contact me at dlivnat@niaid.nih.gov.