Dear Laboratory Directors/Managers/Supervisors:

The ACTG Laboratory Science Group would like to provide our laboratories with information regarding recent changes/updates to the IQA PBMC Proficiency Testing Program.

1. Submission of HIV-positive PBMC samples is no longer required, and laboratories may now submit HIV-negative PBMC samples for scoring. In other words, a site may now chose to submit cells from either HIV+ or HIV- donors and must indicate the HIV serostatus of the donor but do not need to provide documentation of the HIV serostatus.

2. To help expedite initial certification (or recertification) for PBMC cryopreservation, laboratories do not have to wait until the next quarterly submission period before submitting samples for proficiency testing. There is now a Fast Track procedure that laboratories can use for expedited proficiency testing. Each lab needs to contact Raul Louzao (raul.louzao@duke.edu) and Sarah Keinonen (sarah.keinonen@duke.edu) at the IQA to request an expedited proficiency testing submission.

The ACTG has several pending and in-development protocols that require cryopreservation of PBMCs, including protocols for implementation at international sites where PBMC processing is necessary (i.e., no longer optional as in the past). As a result, each laboratory will need to be enrolled in the IQA PBMC Proficiency Testing Program and will require approval for PBMC cryopreservation before starting one of the new protocols.

We strongly encourage all laboratories that are not participating in the IQA PBMC Proficiency Testing Program to initiate contact with the IQA and enroll for expedited PBMC cryopreservation prequalification.

If you have any questions, please contact the ACTG Laboratory Science Group (actglaboratorycoordin@es-3.com).

Kindest Regards,
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