



4th Meeting of the EFLM Working Group for the Preanalytical Phase: A Report

22 November 2013 - Oxford, UK

The pre- and post-analytical phases of the laboratory testing process are now widely recognized as the major sources of laboratory errors. Preanalytical errors are the most common and account for up to 2/3 of the total number of errors. The risk of error in the laboratory testing process is underestimated in everyday clinical practice. The European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory medicine (EFLM) working group on the preanalytical phase (WG-PRE) was established in 2010 to work on reducing the risk. Efficient indicators and educational tools are needed in order to implement the best preanalytical practices.

The terms of reference of the group are:

1. To promote the importance of the quality of the preanalytical phase of laboratory medicine
2. To define the best practices and provide recommendations for some critical activities in the preanalytical phase
3. To design and validate questionnaires for assessing the current practices related to some pre-analytical variables
4. To conduct surveys using validated questionnaires with the aim to assess the current pre-analytical practices.
5. Organize symposia, workshops, webinars or training courses on preanalytical phase issues

This latest meeting of the EFLM-WG-PRE held in November in Oxford, UK, addressed four main topics. Firstly plans were finalized for the **Walter Güder Preanalytical Award** which is to be presented by the EFLM and sponsored by Becton Dickinson. The aim of this award, which will be presented biennially at the EuroLab meeting, is to promote excellence in research in the preanalytical phase and it will be awarded to a young researcher from an EFLM member country. The award will officially be announced in January 2014 with the first award given at EuroLabFocus in Liverpool in October 2014.

The second part of the meeting involved looking at the data from a **European wide survey of compliance of staff performing phlebotomy** with CLSI guidelines. This survey was a follow up to the group's first survey, which looked at the differences in training of staff performing phlebotomy across Europe. Data from the second survey, which looked at compliance of staff in primary care, on medical wards, in outpatient locations and in the emergency

department, will be published in 2014. The paper will complement the first paper in highlighting the poor standardisation of the phlebotomy processes across Europe and will discuss what should be done to rectify this.

In the afternoon the EFLM-WG-PRE discussion moved to planning the **3rd biennial conference** on the preanalytical phase (<http://www.preanalytical-phase.org/>). This one and a half day conference will follow highly successful meetings in Parma (2011) and Zagreb (2013) and will be held in Porto in spring 2015. Currently there are six sessions planned and these are:

1. Communication between the laboratory and the clinic
2. Patient preparation
3. Standardisation of the preanalytical phase in Europe
4. Sample handling and workflow
5. Quality assessment in the preanalytical phase
6. Safety

These sessions will be complemented by a poster session and case studies if the schedule allows.

The final session concentrated on **the future** direction of the group, in particularly how best to disseminate the knowledge obtained by the EFLM-WG-PRE to improve the state of the preanalytical phase across Europe, with a particular emphasis on standardising practices. It was decided that an opinion paper looking critically at all aspects of the phlebotomy process in an evidence based approach would be the best way of highlighting any problems with current guidelines. The group decided to investigate the idea of launching a campaign to promote good phlebotomy practice across Europe at the Porto conference.

Overall the meeting provided a good mixture of discussion around the current state of the preanalytical phase and how best to improve it as well as engaging both staff and the public to ensure improved and standardised practice.

Clin Chem Lab Med. 2013 Aug;51(8):1585-93. doi: 10.1515/cclm-2013-0283. Survey of national guidelines, education and training on phlebotomy in 28 European countries: an original report by the European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EFLM) working group for the preanalytical phase (WG-PRE). Simundic AM, Cornes M, Grankvist K, Lippi G, Nybo M, Kovalevskaya S, Sprongl L, Sumarac Z, Church S.