Special Interest Group on Laboratory Techniques

Minutes of the SIG lunch meeting during 19th ISPD conference Washington, 15-7-2015.

(Co)chairs: Brigitte Faas / Vincenzo Cirigliano

Agenda

1- News from the board
2- Evaluation of preconference courses this year
3- Topics for preconference courses next year
4- Education
   Courses
   Website
   Onsite
5- External quality assessment scheme of NIPT
6- Questions/answers

Despite its start at 12 and lunch being provided, the meeting was only attended by 14 participants.

1- Brigitte briefed about news from the board. A new website will be launched at the end of July, shortly after the ISPD meeting. The information on the SIGs will also be renewed on this website. One of the major issues ISPD wants to focus on the coming years is training and education. All SIGs are supposed to play an important role in and contribute to educational and training activities. Brigitte will be overall coordinator of the educational activities of ISPD.

2- Evaluation of preconference courses was not possible as, except for the chair, only one person was also attending the Lab Techniques combined with the Ethics SIG course on Sunday, July 12. Her opinion was favourable, including the Ethics was appreciated. Accurate evaluation was left for the survey mailed to the participants. The lower number of registrants observed this year was also discussed. Possible reasons identified were high cost of registration for 2 courses and full conference, perception of not too much innovation in the specific fields in comparison with last year’s conference/courses (as we now have annual meetings, we also have annual courses. That might perhaps be too much, in combination with the perception of lack of innovation. We should, however, keep in mind that the numbers of participants were low for all courses this year).

3- Topics suggested for next year preconference courses were, among others, epigenetics and microRNAs that appeared to be new to the audience. Rossa Chiu also put Bioinformatics forward. This should not be necessarily dedicated to NIPT as several other applications are entering the routine of diagnostic laboratories (WES, WGS, targeted panel sequencing etc). It was noted that this course could also include a hands on session, as no laboratory space would be required.
Inclusion of ethics had positive feedback. Brigitte and Vincenzo will make a proposal for the organizing committee of the Berlin 2016 conference before September 12, 2015.

4- Courses, see above

Website. The inclusion of problem solving or questions and answer was discussed. This could include description of unusual cases or findings for individual labs. The inclusion on the website of a list of laboratories with their areas of expertise was also welcomed as in previous meetings, despite little feedback was received in other occasions. The chairs will design a form and send that to the participants.

Onsite. The possibility of onsite training courses was positively accepted. However, it was pointed out the difficulties of organizing such courses attached to a conference, as also the difficulties for a laboratory to host trainees during their daily operations. A list of labs available to receive trainees in their facilities was suggested. For now it was decided it might be too difficult to organize this as SIG, and individuals are encouraged to contact laboratories themselves (e.g. via the list on the website with expertises of the labs).

5- The current situation with European organizations (UKNEQAS / EMQN / CEQAS) was presented regarding the set up of an EQA scheme for NIPT. Brigitte pointed out that developing such a scheme is not an activity ISPD should be involved in, EQA schemes should be run by independent organisations. But, Brigitte and others have been asked as advisers for these organisations (personally, not as ISPD) and as the schemes should fit the needs of the users as much as possible, it is important to have good feedback / ideas from the possible participants of such quality assessment schemes. The right kind of sample suitable for all methods was discussed and agreed that real pregnancy samples seems the most realistic. Difficulties related with sample availability and collection were discussed as also the possibility of setting this up without wet lab involvement to start with. It was suggested in this respect to contact G. Palomaki as he is supposed to be involved in the development of an NIPT EQA for CAP labs and apparently very close to make this available. Brigitte will contact him for further information.

6- The inclusion of registrations of conference and preconference courses lectures on the web site was discussed. This was already introduced this year and it received positive feedback.

V Cirigliano / B Faas, July 24, 2015