Annual report

Study Groups

Title of the study group:
European Consensus Finding Study Group on Laboratory Investigation in Rheumatology

Study Group Leader’s name: Ruud J.T. Smeenk, PhD
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Summary of the activities from March 2013 – March 2014

Forty two European laboratories involved in the field of serological diagnostics in Rheumatic Diseases participate in the Consensus Finding Study Group on autoantibodies associated with systemic autoimmune diseases. The aim of these laboratories is to work towards achieving common consensus in this field: a laboratory result should be the same, wherever the result is obtained. Each year 10 sera from patients with systemic autoimmune diseases are tested for a variety of autoantibodies.

The aim of the consensus group is to facilitate an interactive consensus exercise and discussion forum. It is expected that every participating member should be able to test the sera provided for at least 4 out of the following analytical groups: ANA, DNA, ENA, RF/citrullinated proteins (ACPA), Phospholipids, ANCA/GBM including MPO and PR-3.

It is further expected that participating laboratories are present at the annual group participants meeting, which is held as a satellite meeting of the European Workshop for Rheumatology Research (EWRR). Registration for the EWRR conference is not required to attend the group meeting.

Annual exercise 2013/2014

Pretest

New sera added to the serum bank of the Study Group in the past year were evaluated by the labs of the steering committee members. Results were discussed in a meeting of the Steering Committee that took place in Amsterdam on October 18, 2013.

From the evaluated sera and the existing serum bank of the Consensus Group, 10 sera were selected for this year’s serum round.
At the occasion of this Steering Committee meeting, the Consensus Study Group formally said goodbye to Peter Charles (Kennedy Institute), who has been a highly valued member of the Steering Committee for more than 30 years and who has now retired.

Dispatch of material to participants

The selected sera were dispatched to the participating labs in December, together with CDs containing the spreadsheets to be filled in by the participants.

Results of this year’s exercise

This year’s Consensus workshop took place on February 20, 2014, in Lisbon, Portugal, during the European Workshop for Rheumatology Research. There were about 40 participants attending the workshop. The spreadsheets from the participants received by e-mail (from 42 of the 42 participating labs) were analysed by Dr Dörte Hamann and Dr Stephan Regenass, using a computer analysis program obtained from Labor PD Dr. Volkmann und Kollegen GbR in Karlsruhe and presented during the Consensus Workshop. ANA patterns of the sera were also discussed based on pictures provided by Dr Stephan Regenass from the steering committee.

In general, the participants again reached a high degree of consensus for most of the samples and the images.

Detailed results of this year’s exercise were distributed to the participants and will also be published on the website of the Sanquin Blood Supply Foundation in Amsterdam (via a link distributed to the participants: http://www.sanquin.nl/en/products-services/diagnostic-services/ecfsg/, which can also be reached through www.eular.org).

The second part of the Workshop was dedicated to the future of the Consensus Study Group.

Dr Johan Rönnelid reported on discussions he had (on behalf of the Consensus Study Group) with the Working Group on human autoantibody testing (WG-HAT), IUIS and EASI to evaluate whether merging or close cooperation may lead to a brighter future. One of the samples the Study Group analysed this year was the proposed new standard for anti-dsDNA antibodies. The results obtained were communicated with prof. Pierreluigi Meroni, the ‘founder’ of this new standard. Discussions with prof. Meroni on collaboration of the Study Group with WG-HAT will continue.

Steering Committee

Dr Ruud Smeenk, Sanquin, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (chairman)

Dr Johan Rönnelid, University Hospital, Uppsala, Sweden (chairman-in-waiting)
Dr Charlotte Dahle, University Hospital, Linköping, Sweden (secretary)

Dr Dörte Hamann, Sanquin Diagnostic Services, Amsterdam, the Netherlands (treasurer)

Dr Stephan Regenass, UniversitätsSpital, Zürich, Switzerland

Dr Martin Blüthner, MVZ Labor PD Dr. Volkmann und Kollegen GbR, Karlsruhe, Germany