

Instructions for Use

The agar slants provided contain a simulated bacterial isolate for quality assessment only. It must be handled with strict aseptic techniques and appropriate biosafety precautions.

Intended Use

The NHS-NEQAS Microbiology Program is specifically designed to offer an independent and confidential assessment of individual laboratory performance in the identification of clinically important microbes. It also facilitates a comparative analysis of the methods employed by various participating laboratories.

Product Description

Each EQA round contains a single viable bacterial isolate provided on agar slant. Isolate represents commonly encountered clinical bacterium and is intended to be processed using each laboratory's routine identification and AST protocols.

Storage and Stability

Store the sample at 2–8°C upon receipt. Test within 5-10 working days of dispatch date. Do not freeze. Do not expose to high temperatures or direct sunlight. Discard the sample using appropriate biohazard disposal protocols after use. Streak right after opening the cap.

Exception

- Do not submerge loops into agar. Use surface growth only.
- Do not re-inoculate or modify the original slant.
- It is single use only.

Detailed Testing Instructions

Allow the slant to reach room temperature before handling. Disinfect the outer surface with 70% ethanol. Open the cap aseptically in a biosafety cabinet or equivalent controlled environment. Using a sterile loop or swab, collect a small inoculum from the surface growth of the slant.

Subculture onto appropriate primary media (e.g., blood agar, MacConkey agar, MSA). Incubate plates at 37°C for 18–24 hours under suitable atmospheric conditions (aerobic unless otherwise stated).

Perform:

- Gram stain
- Biochemical or molecular identification
- Antimicrobial susceptibility testing (AST) using your routine method.

Limitations

- 1) This product should not be used past the expiration date. This sample is intended solely for EQA purposes and must not be used for clinical diagnosis, therapeutic decisions, or as a control/reference strain.
- 2) Tube should be handled carefully to avoid contamination or disturbance of the culture.
- 3) The appearance of the slant may vary slightly due to transportation and incubation factors. For example: Mild condensation on the inner walls of the tube is normal.
- 4) Slight color changes in the medium or uneven surface growth may occur and do not indicate spoilage.
- 5) If the sample shows drying, visible contamination, or a strong foul odor, report it to the coordinator before testing.
- 6) Results may vary based on individual lab methods, reagents, and instruments.
- 7) Proper interpretation depends on adherence to the laboratory's routine SOPs and CLSI/EUCAST guidelines.

Reporting Information

Use the online portal (www.nhs-negas.com) tab "Result Submission". Open the Round and Upload the following data:

- Upload PDF Format of "Result Submission Sheet"
- Select Organism Name
- AST panel and results (S/I/R)

Ensure submission is within the reporting deadline indicated in the dispatch. While entering the results, please select the appropriate instrument and reagent from the drop-down menu. If any of them is not listed, contact us, and we will guide you. Ensure the accuracy of all reporting codes by reviewing the online result form; results cannot be changed once submitted.

Timing of Assays

- You will receive a sample every four months (three rounds per year).
- Each sample result online submission date is updated in the calendar on the nhs-negas.com website.

Deadline for Data Submission

Please check nhs-negas.com website for further information regarding the date of result submission.

Reports and Certificates:

- The data will be evaluated by NHS-NEQAS, and individual laboratory reports can be retrieved online via our website.
- Reports will be evaluated, and performance feedback will be sent within 2 weeks of the submission deadline.

Confidentiality

We highly value participant confidentiality. Each laboratory is uniquely identified by a code known only to NHS-NEQAS and the participant. Results from sample analysis should not be disclosed to colleagues from other laboratories before the testing period concludes.

Sample Handling and Recovery Procedure

It is recommended to process the sample within 24 hours of receipt to ensure optimal viability. If the sample arrives more than 10 days after dispatch, it is advised to revive the culture using enrichment broth (LB, brain-heart etc.) for 4-6 hours before subculturing to improve recovery and performance of isolate.

Warning 

This EQA sample contains live bacterial culture and must be treated as potentially infectious. Handle with standard precautions, including the use of gloves, lab coat, and eye protection. Dispose of all materials safely according to your laboratory's biohazard waste protocols. Therefore, it should be handled with the same precautions used with patient specimens, following good laboratory practice.

! Do not assume the organism identity based on this scenario — follow your standard lab protocols for testing.

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Reference No: NHS/QC/Microbiology/IFU/65MIC



Handle as Biohazard Material