How to use EQA results in the laboratory?

Piet Meijer, ECAT Foundation, Leiden, The Netherlands

Nowadays External Quality Assessment (EQA) is an integrated part of the total quality management in clinical laboratories. The ISO Guide 15189 indicates that “laboratories shall participate in interlaboratory comparisons such as those organized by external quality assessment schemes. Laboratory management shall monitor the results of external quality assessment and participate in the implementation of corrective actions when control criteria are not fulfilled”.
It is obvious that participation only in an EQA programme is not sufficient. After receipt of the EQA report the data should be evaluated and when necessary corrective actions should be performed. The question is how this should be done.
In the presentation the following issues will be discussed:
What kind of information is provided in the EQA reports?
What kind of information is not provided in the EQA reports?
How should this information be interpreted?
When should corrective actions be initiated?