

Regional Toxicology Liaison - Quarterly Reflection and Progress Report

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Quarter reported: July - September 2022

The Regional Toxicology Liaisons (RTLs) continue to work at an almost 40 hour per week capacity. Two main areas of focus in quarter 3 were laboratory supply shortages and courtroom testimony training, in addition to various other needs and requests from within the current 3 regions and outside of those regions.

Laboratories across the country experienced significant supply chain issues. The greatest shortages were for the gray top vacutainer tubes used in all forensic toxicology blood collections and laboratory supplies, such as headspace vials for ethanol analysis, and pipette tips for drug testing. The RTLs created a document in collaboration with the SOFT Toxicology Resource Committee (<http://soft-tox.org/blood-tube-shortage>) for laboratories to provide insight and suggestions for solutions to the gray top tube shortage. Since the release of the document, not only have some of the issues been resolved through the suggestions of the RTLs, but it has increased communication across laboratories intra and interstate. Chris Heartsill (R7) has been in contact with a private laboratory that was able to connect the RTL project with a potential secondary vendor for the gray top tubes. Chris obtained a small supply of those tubes and has asked various labs to test them for interferants. This may be a potential avenue to have more than one distributor for the gray top tubes, mitigating any future supply issues with the current, sole vendor.

In July the RTLs were together for the first time since the beginning of the project to attend and speak at the National Alliance to Stop Impaired Driving (NASID) conference. The feedback from the attendees at NASID has been overwhelming and the following outcomes have occurred:

-Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) asked Chris Heartsill (R7) to attend an impaired driving stakeholders meeting in October.

-The Center for Forensic Science Research and Education (CFSRE) requested the RTLs collaborate on a current research project involving specimens from laboratories across the country. A meeting was held shortly after NASID between CFSRE and the RTLs to discuss logistics and timeline for the project.

-The Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) offered to assist the RTL project with any previous or upcoming survey work. Sabra Jones (R5) has taken the lead role and has provided access to the 2021 SOFT survey for analysis and review to WPI.

-AAA has met with Kristen Burke (R9) to discuss the California Surveillance Project. This project will model the work NHTSA has done with Level 1 Trauma Centers and the collection of blood

samples from drivers involved in crashes. After hearing the work of the RTLs, AAA offered its services to R9 as they work through the organization and implementation of the project.

The Organizations of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science requested a webinar from the RTLs to provide background into the program and discuss ways the RTLs can include and promote standards in forensic toxicology. The OSAC was very impressed with the goals of the RTLs and what they have accomplished at this point. The suggestion was made that OSAC, the RTLs and a few other key groups such as the Department of Justice and the Forensic Technology Center of Excellence (FTCoE) convene a meeting to provide further details on the RTLs project and identify areas of collaboration.

From the beginning of the program, feedback from the laboratories has been consistent in the need for training. The topic of most interest is courtroom testimony, not limited to how to provide scientific testimony, but how to stay calm under pressure and overall public speaking advice. The RTLs reached out to California Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, Hoon Chang, and requested his assistance in planning a testimony webinar. Each region had their own training and feedback was very positive with requests for more training such as the one provided by Hoon. The California Office of Traffic Safety is very supportive of this collaboration and the RTLs will continue to incorporate Hoon into future trainings. The RTLs are planning an in-person, day long, testimony workshop in Indiana for toxicologists and Hoon has agreed to provide a presentation for this training. This will be used as a pilot for the curriculum which the RTLs will develop into a program that can be used in all of the regions. The in-person nature of a training such as this is crucial and the RTLs will use the pilot to hone the curriculum and then begin a series of trainings in 2023 for each of the regions.

A significant barrier that has been brought to the RTLs for consideration on multiple occasions is the limitations in the Buy America Act for instrument purchases using specific highway safety funds. While the RTL project is not able to provide direct assistance to this, they have brought this issue to other partners, including the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO), asking for a proposal to exempt forensic science from the Act. Since this is something in which the RTLs are not able to directly assist, the project will continue to advocate to partners of the need for an exemption.

In August, Jennifer Symoun from Toxcel met with the RTLs to provide information on the upcoming Toxicology Summits. The RTLs will be included in any Summits occurring in their regions. The project has asked that the final report for each Summit is provided to gather feedback, insight and potential ideas for improvement for all laboratories.

In September, the Michigan State Police (MSP) laboratory reached out to the Project Manager for guidance on THC testing in blood. An issue was found in the laboratory's legacy THC testing method and all THC testing for the MSP was stopped. Sabra Jones (R5) was in contact with the laboratory and has been working with them to coordinate a new testing method, arrange challenge samples and provide expertise in the review of their method development and

validation. As of the end of September, this work is nearing completion and the MSP laboratory hopes to resume THC testing in October.

Please see the Appendix for a full list of activities related to the project

Project challenges:

The RTLs continue to receive requests for assistance from Regions that are not included in this project. A few of those requests include the following:

- Florida – request for assistance on model DUID legislation
- Colorado – Assist the TSRP with questions on toxicology and legislative language
- Nevada – request to review their current lab structure and methods and provide guidance*
- Oregon – request for how to make the move from urine to blood collection and testing*
- New Jersey – wanted background on RTL program, asked for advice on how the state can better assist their lab. Ask for information on moving from urine to blood.
- New York – request from the RTLs on how to convene a statewide, DUID taskforce. R9 brought the previous chair of the California Task Force to this meeting to provide insight from their experience.
- IACP/DRE – general request to better corroborate the current “confirmation rate” that is used to determine DREs general response rate versus laboratory testing. This request came after the RTLs presented during the annual Impaired Driving and Traffic Safety (IDTS) conference*
- North Dakota – the laboratory is struggling with personnel recruitment/retention, method development and validation, overall funding and some upcoming proposed legislation specific to the laboratory*

*Those items with an asterisk have been funneled to the Project Manager with some guidance and input from the RTLs as their schedules are full for work in their respective regions. The Project Manager has been providing assistance to states outside of the current region scope in an effort to provide support to all states and laboratories.

Appendix

RTL Activities, Q3, 2022

Region 5:

7/6/2022: R5 Weekly Meeting

7/27 – 29/2022: NASID Conference/presentation

7/31/2022: NCLS meeting/presentation

7/9/2022: R5 Minnesota OTS Meeting

8/19/2022: Massachusetts Forensic Science Oversight Board Meeting

8/19/2022: Minnesota DWI Taskforce Meeting

8/29/2022: Wisconsin Impaired Driving Working Group Meeting

9/7/2022: Midwest Toxicology Collaborative Roundtable

9/17 – 21/2022: Governor's Highway Safety Assoc conference/presenter

9/29/2022: National Safety Council Impairment Advisory Board Meeting

**Weekly NHTSA R5 meetings*

**Monthly ASB Toxicology Consensus Body Meetings*

**Monthly AFDO/FOCUS Cannabis Legalization Workgroup Meetings*

**Monthly Dane County Traffic Safety Commission Meetings*

Region 7

7/13/2022: LEL/IACP Information Sharing Meeting

7/27 – 29/2022: NASID Conference/presentation

8/4/2022: Nebraska Title 177 Work Group Meeting

8/17 - 19/2022: Springfield, MO lab visits and conference

-Missouri Impaired Driving Subcommittee Meeting/presentation

8/21 – 23/2022: IDTS conference/presentation

9/7/2022: Midwest Toxicology Collaborative Roundtable

9/9/2022: Iowa Impaired Driving Task Force Meeting

9/14/2022: Region 7 Quarterly Regional Meeting

9/26 – 29/2022: Borkenstein Drug Course/presentation

**ANSI/ASB monthly meeting*

**Monthly R7 State Conference Meeting*

Region 9

7/1/2022: Arizona DPS Lab Visit

7/27 – 29/2022: NASID Conference/presentation

8/21 – 23/2022: IDTS conference/presentation

8/25/2022: San Diego Sheriff Crime Lab visit

-Also met with SD Coroner Lab

8/29/2022: Meeting with NHTSA and CA OTS about drug prevalence study**

8/30/2022: LA County Coroner Lab visit

8/31/2022: Orange County Crime Lab visit
-Also met with LA Sheriff Dept Crime Lab
9/1/2022: SB County Lab visit
9/9/2022: Meeting with Tara Kelley-Baker Surveillance Study**
9/12/2022: Meeting with RTL's and OSAC
9/13/2022: RTL R9 Quarterly Meeting
9/20/2022: DTAP Meeting
9/27/2022: Drug Prevalence Meeting with UC Davis and CA OTS**

**Weekly R9 meetings*

***Several meetings for planning the CA Surveillance Study*