**Unitaid/EGPAF Point-of-Care EID Project (POC EID)**

**Guidance Note on**

**Competency Assessments for POC EID Testing**

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1. **The Purpose of Competency Assessments for POC EID Testing:**

Regular assessments of the competency of POC EID device Operators are crucial for ensuring the quality of the testing procedure at an individual level, and can also serve as a key component of a POC EID quality assurance (QA) scheme. Particularly in the early stages of device operation, Operator assessments will provide further assurance of the quality of testing as well as the competency of health workers to adequately perform POC EID testing. These assessments also have the potential to limit the number of errors resulting from Operator operations. Furthermore, competency assessments can promote professional development of site level staff as well as confidence among the MOH and partners in the overall quality of POC EID testing.

Competency assessments present an ***opportunity to provide the MoH and partners with a valid approach to QA for POC EID testing for potential inclusion in their national QA plan as well as optimize client satisfaction and overall efficiencies in EID testing***. Proper documentation of each competency assessment, combined with a regular assessment scheme, will enable the project to compile a register of all “certified” Operators within our program, and possibly in the country, if the MOH would like to introduce such scheme nation-wide.

1. **Scope of this Guidance:**

This guidance for POC EID competency assessment includes:

* Using the POC EID Testing Competency Assessment Checklists
* Recommended schedule for conducting competency assessments
* Analyzing human resource capacity to conduct scheduled competency assessments
* Associated documents:
1. POC EID Testing Competency Assessment Checklist for *Cepheid Xpert HIV-1 qual* assay
2. POC EID Testing Competency Assessment Checklist for *m-PIMA HIV-1/2 Detect* assay
3. **Using the POC EID Testing Competency Assessment Checklists**:

The *POC EID Testing Competency Assessment Checklists* provide a detailed list of specific tasks that Operators should complete when conducting a test on an *m-PIMA* or *Cepheid* device. These checklists will serve as the principal tool for conducting POC EID testing competency assessments.

Two separate checklists have been developed and tailored to each type of POC EID assay that all countries combined have opted for on this project (*m-PIMA HIV-1/2 Detect* and *Xpert HIV-1 qual* assay). For each visit, be sure to use the appropriate checklist based on the type of device used at the site.

Each checklist assesses several critical steps in the testing cascade, notably the below three main ones:

1. Sample reception, handling, and labelling;
2. Cartridge preparation; and
3. Starting and running the assay

The appropriate *POC EID Testing Competency Assessment Checklist* should be filled out during a normal testing procedure, while the assessor simply observes if the Operator is performing all critical steps outlined on the checklist. For each step performed correctly, the assessor assigns a tick mark in the YES column of the checklist. If any step is performed incorrectly, a tick in the NO column is assigned, an explanation is written in the Comments column. At the end of the assessment, if no more than to five (5) “NO” boxes are ticked, the assessor marks the Operator’s performance by ticking the “satisfactory” box at the end of the form. However, if more than five (5) “NO” boxes have been ticked, representing less than 90% of tasks completed correctly, the assessor marks the “unsatisfactory” box and describes in the form, and to the Operator, the corrective action necessary to obtain a satisfactory rating. The competency assessment checklist ensures that all critical steps of the testing procedure were assessed. Additional notes can be added after the visit so that all observations on performance are captured. The completed and signed checklist allows for documentation and archiving of the assessment. The form can also be kept in the Operator’s personnel file. A database including the names of staff assessed and outcome of each competency assessment can be created to keep a record of all “certified” Operators for each assay. Such practice could be presented to the MOH as one component of an overall quality assurance approach for POC EID testing.

The outcomes of the competency assessment could significantly improve the confidence of the Operator as well as identify critical areas for improvement for which suggestions should be made for how to address the issue so that it does not continue to occur. When needed, a refresher training can be planned to address sub-optimal performance in various areas assessed, followed by another competency assessment to document progress.

1. **Recommended Schedule for Conducting Competency Assessments:**

It is recommended that all device Operators, whether they are existing employees or newly transferred to a POC testing site, shall be assessed after their first Operator device training. They should be assessed again six (6) months after their initial training, and every year thereafter. Thus, all device operators must be assessed, and their performance documented, at least once per year. It is recommended to document when each competency assessment is done for each individual, and to capture this information in training registers. It is important to clearly document which type or cadre of health worker was assessed (e.g. nurse, midwife, clinical officer), and which type of POC EID assay (e.g. *m-PIMA*, *Xpert*) was used during their competency assessment.

1. **Analyzing Human Resource Capacity to Conduct Competency Assessments:**

As the number of POC EID testing sites and certified Operators are likely to increase over time, it is important for any program to carefully analyze its human resource capacity to conduct competency assessments. As such, the scheduling of competency assessments can be aligned with the on-site monitoring visit scheme so that no or minimal extra human resources or transport logistics are needed for this activity.

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