

Comment on Allegation #4

VA Microbiology's procedure manual is not entirely a working manual. For example, the Stool Culture Section now is merely a general description; one could not follow step by step to perform the necessary tests. Cari Oath (acting supervisor at the time) had just revised the Respiratory Culture Section recently so everyone can follow and be consistent.

Additional Comment

Please note that since VA Microbiology's former supervisor (Sheree Huene) left at the end of last year, we only have rotating acting supervisor. The new medical director of Pathology and Laboratory (Dr. Ritter) is very sincere about improving laboratory service. We should have a new supervisor on board soon. We will all work together to rectify the deficiency.

Comment on Allegation #5

VA Microbiology had 20 positive cultures for *Gardnerella vaginalis* between January 1, 2009, and January 22, 2010 because I initiated the identification process. Prior to my arrival, none of my colleague was identifying this organism. This was why I was accused of implementing procedure without acknowledgement of management and was terminated. If they had been identifying and had a procedure in force at the time, they would have shown it to me while I was in training instead of following me.

Since Vitek II System now has ability to identify *Gardnerella vaginalis*, this no longer poses a problem.

Comment on Allegation #6

VA Microbiology Lab. was still using Vitek I several months after I started working there in January 2009. Vitek I required off-line confirmatory test for ESBL. Not only they didn't have procedure manual, they were not even performing the confirmatory test. They started to perform the confirmatory test after my suggestion without the procedure.

Again, this is no longer a problem after deployment of newer version of Vitek II.

Comment on Allegation #8

VA Microbiology Lab. continues to receive raw stool samples for culture. I performed the culture set up duty for 2 months after my return to work there. Not a single stool sample arrived in proper preservative. Cari Oath (acting supervisor at the time) did ask us to find out and write down the sample collection time but this will not help the preservation of sample integrity.

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Comment on Allegation #9

I did have conversation with VA infectious control nurse twice. In fact, she was the one asked me why we didn't isolate any Campylobacter the first time. I told her that stool samples were not in proper transport media and what is the right medium to be in. She in turn requested Sheree (supervisor at the time) to order Cary-Blair transport media. She probably had short memory when questioned. Both of hospitals (in Missouri) I had worked recently (St. Mary's and St. Louis Children) have their fair share of isolating Campylobacter.

Since Campylobacter is part of stool culture, this would be covered as long as we comply with Allegation #8.

Comment on Allegation #10

All stool samples sent to reference laboratory were indeed packaged according to the reference laboratory instructions. This is because VA Microbiology Lab staff is the ones who place all stool samples into proper preservative before sent off. This really is one step too late. The integrity of stool sample has already been compromised when arrived in lab. The problem might have been resolved for a period of time. For now, as far as I know, stool samples still arrive in lab unpreserved.

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Comment on Allegation#11

VA Microbiology's procedure manual for *Corynebacterium* only covers one species – *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. Since 1995, there are numerous new species discovered as pathogenic. VA Microbiology lacks guide line regarding how to work up and report. For example, we are still not identifying *Corynebacterium ureolyticum* from urine culture even though it is a well-known pathogen causing urinary tract infection.

See Additional Comment for Allegation #4

Comment on Allegation #14

I was the one introducing my colleague to APIWEB. Prior to my arrival in January 2009, they were using the outdated codebook (published in 1970's). I even provided them with my own ID and password that I used for my previous job so they could have immediately access to API web site.

Comment on Allegation #15

When I started working for VA Microbiology, the Quality Control book was totally unorganized. For example, if you wanted to trace QC record on one particular medium, you had to flip page after page through the entire book. I was the one who made up the QC sheets of their present form for each individual medium and reagent so they are easy to use and trace.

