

PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENT OF CMPT CRITIQUES - APRIL 1999
—CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND LESSONS LEARNED—
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INTRODUCTION Last spring, you will recall that a survey was sent by CMPT to all participants, asking for thoughts and opinions on a range of communication related topics, including history forms, critiques, use of the internet, use of e-mail, and CMPT Connections. We presented some of the results in the Fall 1999 issue of CMPT Connections (Volume 3 Number 3). This report looks at a critical component of the CMPT program—our critiques.

To review the procedure, and to put the results in context, the survey was sent out in April 1999 to all laboratories. Each laboratory was invited to participate, and was asked to provide responses from at least 2 different people, from a range of positions associated with Microbiology. Laboratories were reminded to send in their responses one month later to ensure that a representational sample was achieved. Once received, the results were tabulated in sections, and assessed.

WHO RESPONDED? Questionnaires were returned from 215 people from 112 laboratories, which represents approximated 66% of clinical microbiology laboratories in CMPT. Responders included pathologists, microbiologists, charge and head and bench technologists, with importantly, the largest group (106 [48.0%]) being bench technologists. All categories were represented, as were all provinces. Categories and provinces were represented in the same proportion as their participation in CMPT, with the exception of one province. Because of the size and distribution of the group of responders, it was interpreted that the responses provided a valid representation of the opinions of CMPT users.

At the time of the send-out 198 (92%) of responders said they had received the last package of critiques, and of those, 188 (95.0%) had read at least one. One hundred forty three (72.2%) responders said that they had read them all, however it was obvious that most participants tend to read the critiques that pertain to them (more on this topic later).

With respect to availability and accessibility for reading critiques, 173 (78.6%) said that critiques were posted or otherwise made available to all people within the laboratory. Additionally 211 (96.3%) reported that critiques were maintained in some form of library, most often within a binder, often indexed, for later reference. Again, more on this topic also later.

CONTINUING EDUCATION Almost all responders (97.3%) felt that the critiques were useful as a tool for maintaining their continuing education. This result is certainly most encouraging for CMPT. Interestingly, in this era of increasing mandatory requirements for continuing education for maintenance of competency, 158 (71.5%) thought that CMPT critiques should be included within mandatory continuing education. This opinion was held throughout all categories and provinces, and was supported by a majority within all position groups, but was held significantly most strongly by bench-technologists.

COMMUNICATION Important to CMPT is the ease with which participants feel comfortable in entering into a dialogue with CMPT. It is a matter of accessibility and approachability. One hundred forty three (64.7%) said that they would communicate with CMPT, either directly or indirectly, if they believe that critiques contained misleading or wrong information. Another 40 (18.1%) said that they should and would consider doing so in the future. On the other hand, only 30 (9.0%) said they would contact us if they found the critiques particularly useful. When we examine our telephone logs and letters, we suspect that these responses accurately reflect current practice. This is important to us. While we enjoy the occasional compliment, we learn more and can respond to the concerns.

COMMENTS The last part of the form provided a space for comments. In total 67 were received, most of which were positive, reiterating the value of the program and critiques as a useful tool for continuing education. Four comments talked about the formatting of the critiques, and commented that the double column format was easier to read, but that more attention to the tables by including titles and more consistency with respect to statistical analysis would be helpful. Five noted positively that they appreciated the brevity of the critiques, although one comment was that they were too long.

Relating to the comment above that not all critiques were read by all people, one person commented that it was not necessary to send the critiques for the category A and B laboratory challenges to the C laboratories. This has come up as a matter of discussion within the CMPT committee. It was felt that some laboratories

would appreciate receiving all the critiques because of their educative value. We also understand the pile of paper that is received by all laboratories every day. Laboratories not wanting to receive the extra critiques should contact CMPT.

TURNAROUND TIME The greatest comment of concern raised was with respect to turnaround time. While one participant commented that the critiques were timely, 4 requested that critiques come sooner, one suggesting that they be received at the time of the preliminary report. We are always conscious of turnaround time, and work to ensure it is as brief as possible. From the time that samples are sent to the time that reports are received is 3 weeks. Once the results are received they need to be entered into the computer, be analyzed, and be sent to the committee members for review. A preliminary critique is written. A meeting is held for grading and assessment, and the decisions of the committee are incorporated into the critiques. The finalized critiques are printed, and then sent to the laboratories. Currently our turnaround time from sample sent to critique sent is approximately 8 to 9 weeks. Until such time that all laboratories are connected to an electronic network, it will, unfortunately, be difficult for us to make substantial changes in turnaround time. In the interim, for those who have Internet access, you should know that the preliminary results are posted in the discussion area of our web site, and that all critiques are posted as well. Those regularly visiting the site will reduce the turnaround time by perhaps as much as a week, considering the time lost in the mails.

SUMMARY CMPT has undergone a client satisfaction survey. The response was widespread, representing all categories, regions and professionals related to microbiology laboratories. With respect to the critiques, most found them well formatted, and a useful part of continuing education. Turnaround time is a concern for some. Accessing the web site may be one solution.

Participants are encouraged to make the connection with CMPT by telephone, fax, email, web site or mail.

[Ed. note: Several format changes have been made to the critiques since this survey; for example, tables are now numbered and include titles. Thank-you for your comments.]