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TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

by
Dr L.U. Viinikka
Department of Clinical Chemistry
University of Oulu
90220 Oulu 22, Finland



The staff of an endocrinology laboratory should:

- (i) have a detailed understanding of endocrine physiology and pathophysiology,
- (ii) be able to develop new hormone assays of clinical significance utilizing immunological, chemical and physical methods independent of commercial facilities, and
- (iii) provide a rapid and accurate routine hormone assay service to clinicians.

The medical staff are primarily responsible for the first function and for interpretation of the results of various assays. They also usually initiate the setting-up of new assays - either on their own accord or in response to requests from their clinical colleagues. Therefore, physicians in hormone laboratories should, in addition to a detailed knowledge of clinical endocrinology, have extensive training in methodology and an understanding of the different types of hormone assays.

Clinical chemists have, as their main responsibility, assurance of the quality of assay procedures and development of new assays. Consequently they should have an extensive training in the immunological, chemical and physical methods used. Chemical expertise is very important especially in making labelled reactants and immunogens. They should also have detailed knowledge of automation and quality control of hormone assays.

The speed and accuracy of the service provided for routine hormone measurements is largely dependent on the technical staff. They must understand the basic principles of the methodology used and strive continually to improve the quality control data. Thus, their training should include a considerable amount of theory in addition to acquiring such practical skills as accurate pipetting.

Finally, and very important, a hormone laboratory cannot keep up to date, unless all its staff undergo continuous training and, because active scientific work is one of the best forms of training, scientific projects should be an essential part of the work of a modern endocrinology laboratory.

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