



International Agreement to Improve Quality in Laboratory Medicine Nomenclature, Properties and Units (NPU) Terminology

The undernoted three organisations are pleased to announce the signing on 7 January 2014 of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Agreement regarding NPU terminology:

- International Federation of Clinical Chemistry & Laboratory Medicine (IFCC)
- International Union of Pure & Applied Chemistry (IUPAC)
- Danish National e-Health Authority (DeHA)

In laboratory medicine one of the most basic, but important, challenges is to ensure that we have a common understanding of what is being measured in what biological system and of how the results will be expressed and in what units. To address this issue the three partner organisations have developed, tested and refined an intuitive and comprehensive NPU terminology. The MoU and Agreement formalises the achievements to date and provides a template for greater international promotion of NPU terminology as an aid to harmonised practice and better patient safety.

At the centre of the IFCC-IUPAC project are the NPU codes and definitions which have been in widespread use in electronic health communication for more than a decade. The NPU system involves the application of the syntax, semantic rules and format of NPU terminology for coded kinds-of property across clinical laboratory sciences.

In welcoming the MoU and Agreement IFCC President Graham Beastall said: "Laboratory Medicine results influence a high percentage of clinical decisions. In an increasingly global health community it is vital to have harmonised terminology for these results. We encourage the widespread adoption and application of NPU terminology and use of the NPU database. We will work with other international organisations to ensure that NPU terminology is aligned with international healthcare terminology."

A user's guide to NPU terminology and the NPU database has been published in both chemistry and clinical chemistry literature. This guide provides a clear explanation of the system and of its operation. Access to the NPU terminology in English is available from the Danish Release Centre under the National e-Health Authority (www.labterm.dk) and also from the IFCC website (www.ifcc.org).

Persons wishing to know more about the NPU terminology should contact:

- Ulla Magdal Petersen, Scientific lead for the NPU database at UMP@ssi.dk
- Robert Flatman, Chair of the joint Committee on NPU robert.flatman@snp.com.au

References:

Petersen UM, Dybkaer, R, Olesen H. Properties and units in the clinical laboratory sciences. Part XXIII. The NPU terminology, principles, and implementation: A user's guide. Pure Appl Chem 2012; **84**: 137-165
Clin Chem Lab Med 2012; **50**: 35-50