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# Our profession now has a European name: specialist in laboratory medicine.

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## EFLM Position Statement

### Our profession now has a European name: Specialist in Laboratory Medicine

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#### Abstract

We need a common name to have a clear identity which best describes the scope of the work we carry out for the patients.

A clear and easily understood name which reflects the level of education and training of a specialist in the medical laboratory, and hence eligibility to be on the EC4 Register, is therefore needed, whatever academic background and whether polyvalent or sub-specialised.

**Key words:** laboratory medicine; polyvalent; sub-specialized; profession name

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#### Why is the name so important?

In the era of 'omics' and with the advancement of technology everyday medical decisions are more and more influenced by medical laboratory data. Our profession is relatively young compared to other medical subspecialties. We come from different backgrounds (MDs, Pharmacists, Scientists) but whatever our background and whatever our specialties, we all work in Medical Laboratories.

When medical laboratories began to develop, each country used a different name for the profession. This is further complicated by the large variation of sub-specialities practiced by medical laboratories in the different countries of Europe. Many of us are polyvalent, others are sub-specialized, but in principle we all practice the same profession.

Thus it is not surprising that even in our own countries people outside the profession do not understand who specialists working in medical laboratories are and what exactly they do. EFLM is now an established European organization for the profession but except for ourselves, few know whom exactly we represent.

Let us be clear: If we confuse ourselves, consider how confusing it is for people we are in contact

with, such as EU politicians, administrators, civil servants! We have to convince these people of our skills and expertise and why we exist and are needed. Two of EFLM's missions are to represent laboratory medicine at European level to political, professional, scientific and other bodies, and to promote the profession in Europe (1). Therefore we need a common name to have a clear identity which best describes the scope of the work we carry out for the patients.

Established medical specialties have a name that everybody understands and knows. It describes who they are and what they do: e.g. gynaecologist, cardiologist, radiologist, endocrinologist, etc. A clear and easily understood name which reflects the level of education and training of a specialist in the medical laboratory, and hence eligibility to be on the EC4 Register (2), is therefore needed.

#### History

For a profession made up of professionals from different backgrounds we need a name that all

groups and all countries will accept. In many countries names have been argued about for years and are jealously guarded.

The importance of finding a name for our profession has been discussed for years:

- at all national and European meetings;
- in Prague at the FESCC-UEMS meeting in 2004;
- in Warsaw at a European conference on education in laboratory medicine in March 2010;
- in Lisbon at the 1<sup>st</sup> EFLM-UEMS joint conference in October 2010 where it was decided that a common European name must be chosen.

### How to choose the right name for the profession?

As with any name, it must be:

- acceptable to all, including those who specialize in different sub-specialties within the profession;
- short, clear and easy to remember.

### Proposal for the name of our profession in Europe

EFLM officers suggested many possible names that were vigorously discussed. The three preferred names were then sent to all EFLM National Societies for consideration, with an invitation to vote for their choice.

### References

1. *European Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine*. Available at: <http://www.efcclm.eu>. Accessed August 2012.
2. Zerah S, McMurray J, Hallworth M, Schuff-Werner P, Haushofer A, Szekeres T, et al. *Guide to the European Register of Specialists in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine. Version 3-2010*. *Clin Chem Lab Med* 2010;48:999-1008.

### The result of the vote and the new European name:

Of the 39 European members (National Societies), 28 (72%) have voted.

Eighteen (64%) of the votes cast were in favor of the name: **SPECIALIST IN LABORATORY MEDICINE**

We are most grateful to all who contributed to the discussion and to the National Societies for their interest and endorsement.

### Conclusion

The need for a single European name for our profession has been recognized and addressed by EFLM. In consultation with its member societies, EFLM has agreed the name **SPECIALIST IN LABORATORY MEDICINE** as it encompasses all specialists working in the field from whatever academic background and whether polyvalent or sub-specialized.