

NASCOLA 1997-2007: Looking Back and Forward

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The North American Specialized Coagulation Laboratory Association (NASCOLA) has been in existence for 10 years. Its mission is to enhance coagulation testing quality by: 1) critical evaluation of laboratory testing through proficiency testing, 2) guideline development, 3) enhanced communication, 4) collaboration, and 5) education.

Methods: The history of NASCOLA and its accomplishments over the past 10 years were reviewed, using information obtained from executive members, archived documents, the NASCOLA website (www.nascola.org) and the membership, by review of collected data from a recent strategic planning exercise.

Results: NASCOLA membership has expanded over the past 10 years, from 13 initial members, to 60 institutional, 13 associate, 2 individual and 2 honorary members as of early 2007. NASCOLA activities have also grown in scope to fulfill mandates in proficiency testing and in promoting communication, collaboration, education and research. Recently, NASCOLA has undertaken collaborative research projects that include studies on patterns-of-practice in specialized coagulation testing. These projects have impacted guideline development (on topics that include testing for platelet function disorders and for lupus anticoagulants), with presentations at international conferences. NASCOLA has published on protein S testing and on testing for platelet functional disorders in peer-reviewed publications. Recent studies have been completed on testing for lupus anticoagulants and heparin-induced thrombocytopenia. NASCOLA has also helped establish an international association of external quality assessment organizations interested in coagulation laboratory practice (EQATH). Membership report high level support for NASCOLA and its mission, and value the excellent proficiency testing program (survey modules obtained from ECAT), and opportunities for education and collaborative research. They also report that NASCOLA has positively influenced their testing practices.

Conclusions: The size and scope of NASCOLA activities has grown over the past 10 years. During this period, the organization has succeeded in promoting mission-related activities, which are valued by its members.