



**Korean association of external quality assessment service  
and proficiency testing**

**Sail Chun, Won-Ki Min**

*Department of Laboratory Medicine, Asan Medical Center University of Ulsan College of Medicine, Seoul, Korea*

In 1973, the first Korean clinical laboratory survey program was started for 11 chemistry tests by 18 major university hospitals' clinical laboratories to verify the reliability of clinical laboratory tests. In August 1976, the Korean Society of Quality Control in Clinical Pathology was founded for the quality assurance of clinical laboratories. On 6th of September 1991, the Korean Association of Quality Assurance for Clinical Laboratory (KAQACL) was approved as a corporation by the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare.

Until 1994, the KAQACL's six subcommittees including Clinical Chemistry, Clinical Microbiology, Diagnostic Hematology, Immunoserology, Clinical Microscopy and Blood Bank were in charge of external quality assessment (EQA) programs of their own responsibility. In 1995, subcommittees of immunoassay and therapeutic drug monitoring were added to service. Also subcommittees of Inherited Metabolic Disease and Genetic Diagnostics were added in 1998. Since then, KAQACL's EQA program had been maintained as 70 test items hosted by 10 subcommittees until 2015. In 2001, the number of participating laboratories exceeded 500 and it exceeded 1,000 in 2009.

However, there were a lot of test items that were not covered by the KAQACL proficiency testing program, which could not satisfy laboratory accreditation program like the Laboratory Medicine Foundation's requirement. To overcome this issue, after three years' preparation from 2013 to 2015, we launched the next-generation proficiency testing program in 2016. The name of the association was changed from KAQACL to the Korean Association of External Quality Assessment Service (KEQAS).

The KEQAS next-generation proficiency testing scheme is composed of 46 programs categorized base on academic classifications, test areas, types of proficiency testing materials and the convenience of participating laboratories. And it covers more than 300 test items. In addition, we introduced new information and logistics systems to improve flexibility, scalability, and uniformity.

Currently, KEQAS' EQA program is composed of 54 programs covering 326 test items and 1,554 clinical laboratories are participating. In August 2015, the KEQAS was certified for the ISO 17043 to meet the global standards. Also KEQAS is planning to expand its services to neighboring Asia-Pacific countries in the future.