

- External Quality Assessment (EQA) is a valuable tool to identify problems in laboratories, and highlight differences between methods.
- For the majority of UK NEQAS BC exercises, we employ plasma obtained from donors with specific disorders of haemostasis. This includes plasma from donors on oral anticoagulant therapy for anticoagulant control, and donors with clotting factor deficiencies for screening tests and assays.
- Spiking of plasma may be employed to mimic clinical samples. Such material should give similar results to clinical samples (ie, be commutable) to ensure appropriate conclusions can be drawn. Spiked material is suitable for EQA only if commutability is demonstrated.
- Here at UK NEQAS BC we have carried out extensive investigations, including multicentre exercises, where spiked samples have been tested alongside matched *ex vivo* samples. These include studies of samples spiked with dabigatran, rivaroxaban, enoxaparin, unfractionated heparin (UFH) and factor concentrates.
- There is a danger of inappropriate conclusions arising over methods used with non-commutable samples – for example plasma spiked with UFH will give a different pattern of results to plasma from a patient receiving UFH. However, other samples may be prepared using spiked plasma, where suitable commutability is demonstrated.