

# EP39

## A Hierarchical Approach to Selecting Surrogate Samples for the Evaluation of *In Vitro* Medical Laboratory Tests

This guideline establishes a definition of a surrogate sample, provides recommendations for determining when to use surrogate samples, and describes a process for selecting the most appropriate surrogate sample.

A guideline for global application developed through the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute consensus process.

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Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute

P: +1.610.688.0100

F: +1.610.688.0700

[www.clsi.org](http://www.clsi.org)

[standard@clsi.org](mailto:standard@clsi.org)

# A Hierarchical Approach to Selecting Surrogate Samples for the Evaluation of *In Vitro* Medical Laboratory Tests

April Veoukas, BS, JD  
Shannon Bennett, MS, MBA, CMQOE(ASQ)  
Melissa Barhoover, PhD, RAC  
Natalya Benina, MS  
Marvin Berman, PhD  
Marc D. Goldford, BS  
Shiaolan Y. Ho, PhD  
Mark D. Kellogg, PhD, MT(ASCP), DABCC, FAACC  
Mary Knighten, MT(AMT)

Marina V. Kondratovich, PhD  
Gregory Jay Pomper, MD  
Paula Ladwig, MS, MT(ASCP)  
Fred D. Lasky, PhD  
Sangeetha Vijaysri Nair, DVM, PhD  
Patrick O'Donnell, BA  
Michael Pikulski, PhD, DABCC, FACC  
Yvonne Shea, MS  
Bin Zhang, MD, MS

## Abstract

Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute guideline EP39—*A Hierarchical Approach to Selecting Surrogate Samples for the Evaluation of In Vitro Medical Laboratory Tests* establishes a standard definition of a surrogate sample. It presents a hierarchical approach for determining when to use surrogate samples and selecting an appropriate one. It also describes elements of a surrogate sample plan and includes technical preparation guidance for the characteristic to be measured or detected and for artificial matrix compositions. This guideline provides examples for specific performance study types.

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## Committee Membership

### Consensus Council

**James R. Petisce, PhD**  
**Chairholder**  
**BD Diagnostic Systems**  
**USA**

Avis Danishefsky, PhD  
 FDA Center for Devices and  
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M. Laura Parnas, PhD, DABCC  
 Roche Diagnostics  
 USA

**Tania Motschman, MS, MT(ASCP)SBB**  
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**USA**

Collette Fitzgerald, PhD  
 Centers for Disease Control and  
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Matthew A. Wikler, MD, FIDSA, MBA  
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 USA

Anne T. Daley, MS, MT(ASCP)DLM,  
 CMQ/OE(ASQ)CSBB  
 USA

James H. Nichols, PhD, DABCC, FAACC  
 Vanderbilt University School of  
 Medicine  
 USA

### Document Development Committee on Surrogate Sample Framework

**April Veoukas, BS, JD**  
**Chairholder**  
**Abbott Laboratories**  
**USA**

Natalya Benina, MS  
 Fujirebio Diagnostics  
 USA

Mary Knighten, MT(AMT)  
 Diagnostica Stago  
 USA

**Shannon Bennett, MS, MBA,**  
**CMQOE(ASQ)**  
**Vice-Chairholder**  
**Mayo Clinic**  
**USA**

Cheryl Dobbe, MLT, MT(ASCP)  
 Centers for Medicare & Medicaid  
 Services  
 USA

Marina V. Kondratovich, PhD  
 FDA Center for Devices and  
 Radiological Health  
 USA

Mark D. Kellogg, PhD, MT(ASCP),  
 DABCC, FAACC  
 Boston Children's Hospital  
 USA

Gregory J. Pomper, MD  
 College of American Pathologists  
 USA

**Expert Panel on Evaluation Protocols**

**Paula Ladwig, MS, MT(ASCP)**  
**Chairholder**  
**Mayo Clinic**  
**USA**

Jeffrey R. Budd, PhD  
 USA

Edward Ki Yun Leung, PhD, DABCC,  
 FAACC  
 Children’s Hospital Los Angeles  
 USA

**James H. Nichols, PhD, DABCC,**  
**FAACB**  
**Vice-Chairholder**  
**Vanderbilt University School of**  
**Medicine**  
**USA**

A. Paul Durham, MA  
 APD Consulting  
 USA

Stephen Lovell, BS, PhD  
 FDA Center for Devices and  
 Radiological Health  
 USA

Valeria L. Alcon, PhD  
 Health Canada  
 Canada

Brett Holmquist, PhD, ASCP, DABCC,  
 FAACC  
 LabCorp - Endocrine Sciences  
 USA

Nancy S. Miller, MD  
 Boston University School of Medicine  
 USA

J. Rex Astles, PhD, DABCC, FAACC  
 Centers for Disease Control and  
 Prevention  
 USA

Jesper V. Johansen, PhD  
 Radiometer Medical A/S  
 Denmark

Jeffrey E. Vaks, PhD  
 Roche Molecular Diagnostics  
 USA

**Staff**

Clinical and Laboratory Standards  
 Institute  
 USA

Laura Martin  
*Editorial Manager*

Kristy L. Leirer, MS  
*Editor*

Tabitha Kern, MS, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup>  
*Project Manager*

Catherine E.M. Jenkins, ELS  
*Editor*

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Melissa Barhoover, PhD, RAC  
 Diagnostica Stago  
 USA

Fred D. Lasky, PhD  
 Lasky Consulting  
 USA

Michael Pikulski, PhD, DABCC, FACC  
 Sonic Reference Laboratory  
 USA

Marvin Berman, PhD  
 Abbott Laboratories  
 USA

Sangeetha Vijaysri Nair, DVM, PhD  
 Hologic, Inc.  
 USA

Yvonne Shea, MS  
 FDA Center for Devices and  
 Radiological Health  
 USA

Marc D. Goldford, BS  
 Sekisui Diagnostics  
 USA

Patrick O’Donnell, BA  
 Roche Molecular Diagnostics  
 USA

Bin Zhang, MD, MS  
 Siemens-Healthineers  
 USA

Shiaolan Y. Ho, PhD  
 Abbott Laboratories  
 USA

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# Foreword

Terms such as “contrived,” “altered,” “processed,” “diluted,” “supplemented,” and “simulated” have been used interchangeably to describe substitutions for patient samples. This guideline establishes a uniform term, “surrogate sample,” and definition to describe material(s) that is used as a substitute for body fluid or tissue from a single human individual.

When appropriately characterized patient samples are unavailable, surrogate samples serve an important role in the development, validation, and verification of laboratory tests. Surrogate samples may be needed for many reasons, including limited sample volume or inadequate numbers of patient samples with concentrations at medical decision levels or at the extremes of the analytical measuring interval. A lack of available patient samples may be due to low disease prevalence, invasive sampling methods, or other reasons.

This guideline establishes an approach for selecting, preparing, and using surrogate samples. It describes the principles for creating a surrogate sample plan and presents a hierarchy, by performance study type, for selecting an appropriate surrogate sample. The hierarchical approach is demonstrated through product- and performance-specific examples.

## KEY WORDS

**Artificial analyte**

**Pooled**

**Supplemented**

**Artificial matrix**

**Sample plan**

**Surrogate sample**

**Hierarchy**

**Simulated**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### This chapter includes:

- Guideline's scope and applicable exclusions
- Background information pertinent to the guideline's content
- Standard precautions information
- Terminology information, including:
  - Terms and definitions used in the guideline
  - Abbreviations and acronyms used in the guideline

# A Hierarchical Approach to Selecting Surrogate Samples for the Evaluation of *In Vitro* Medical Laboratory Tests

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Scope

This guideline establishes a definition of “surrogate sample” and an approach for selecting, preparing, and using these samples. It discusses surrogate sample:

- Composition
- Technical preparation
- Selection criteria
- Documentation and planning
- Use in specific performance study types

The intended users of this guideline are *in vitro* diagnostic (IVD) device developers, laboratorians, and regulators. This guideline does not describe performance study design, which is covered in other standards and guidelines (see CLSI document EP19<sup>1</sup>).

### 1.2 Background

Development, validation, and verification of laboratory tests depends on the availability of patient samples for testing. When appropriate patient samples are unavailable to validate test performance, using surrogate samples enables more efficient use of biological materials, improves testing efficiency, and facilitates the development of tests for new biomarkers. Patient samples for test development and other uses may be unavailable for several reasons.

Reasons that patient samples cannot be used include:

- Logistical constraints
- Insufficient sample volumes
- Inadequate numbers of samples, such as those with concentrations at medical decision levels (MDLs) or at the extremes of the analytical measuring interval (AMI)
- Technical constraints
- Unsatisfactory samples (ie, that lack the necessary characteristics for a performance study)
- Instability of samples
- Unavailability of blank or negative samples