



The Royal College of Pathologists
Pathology: the science behind the cure

New home for the UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations

In October 2023, the College's website became the new home for the UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations. Read more about this project below.

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In this article, Shahmeen Ali and Ruhi Siddiqui from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) give further insight into the migration of the UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations (UK SMIs) to the College website – a collaborative project between UK SMIs and the College.

Introduction

The UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations (UK SMIs) are a comprehensive referenced collection of recommended algorithms and procedures, which are a crucial resource for diagnostic and public health microbiology laboratories in the UK. These standards have been developed since 1996 by collaborative efforts of working groups of experienced laboratory-based medical and scientific microbiologists from across the UK Health Security Agency and the NHS.

With approximately 100 documents, they set a high standard of practice to which all clinical and public health microbiology laboratories in the UK are expected to adhere. The UK SMIs are accredited by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and were previously hosted on GOV.UK.

Accessibility regulations and user preferences

The hosting of the UK SMIs on the College website represents an important move, driven by the requirements to comply with 2018 accessibility regulations. These regulations, designed to ensure digital content is accessible to all users, resulted in a re-evaluation of the document format and accessibility features on GOV.UK.

The decision to host UK SMIs on a new platform was mainly due to differences in document format preferences. Users of UK SMIs expressed a strong preference for PDFs while GOV.UK required HTML for document publication. Recognising the importance of our users' needs and considering all the options and implications, the decision was made to host these documents on the College website, as the College considers audience needs and usability when deciding on the format of documents. This solution allowed the Standards Unit to have full control over the content, format and display of the UK SMIs in the preferred PDF format.

Migration process and collaborative efforts

The migration process, which began in July 2023, was a collaborative effort between UK SMIs and the College. This effort involved updating and recategorising information into suitable sections, ensuring that the UK SMIs maintained high standards of practice while enhancing the overall user experience.

Effective communication with users and partner organisations was a priority throughout the migration process. We actively sought user feedback to ensure that the transition met expectations and made updates where necessary.

Launch of the new webpages and continuous improvement

The UK SMIs were officially launched on the College website on 30 October 2023. Users were informed about the migration through various channels, ensuring that the transition was smooth and well-communicated.

Following the migration, we conducted a thorough evaluation process to assess the success of the transition. We will keep making improvements to our webpages to ensure that the UK SMIs continue to meet the evolving needs of our users, demonstrating a commitment to providing the best possible resource.

Decommissioning the GOV.UK webpages

Once the migration of UK SMIs was successfully completed, the GOV.UK webpages hosting the UK SMIs were decommissioned on 12 December 2023. To ensure a seamless experience, all links to the GOV.UK pages now automatically redirects to the relevant pages on the [College website](#), where users can access all UK SMI documents in the preferred PDF format.

We recommend bookmarking or saving the UK SMI webpage on the College website for easier access to the repository of UK SMI documents.

Your feedback matters

The UK SMIs team greatly values user feedback. If you encounter any issues or have suggestions, please email standards@ukhsa.gov.uk to share your thoughts.

Acknowledgments

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