



## Medical Review in Recovery Management

### MRO Process in Recovery Monitoring Drug Testing

The medical review of laboratory results by a physician specially trained in the process and certified by a national organization recognized by SAMHSA is a process that has been in place since the very onset of federally mandated drug testing in the 20th century. Initially designed as a step to protect specimen donors from false accusations of illicit drug use, these certified physicians, called MRO's, have become an integral part of drug testing programs nationally and in many other countries of the world. Outside of the very restrictive world of workplace drug testing, the role of the MRO has expanded to become more than just forensic. Medical review, especially in recovery monitoring services, is interpretive and collaborative, as well as forensic. It is still a formal process, and it follows a repeatable formula that is the same every time a review is performed as required in any forensic process. Here is the formula:

1. Review all necessary paperwork for matching ID and laboratory reports.
2. Discuss any issues or questions with appropriate laboratory, program, or FSSolutions personnel.
3. Talk to the donor of the specimen.
4. Identify the donor (ID number or birthday).
5. Explain the verification process to the donor.
6. Advise the donor that anything said can be reported to the program.
7. Ask non-result related questions (if necessary)
8. Inform of the test result.

9. Seek result specific information. (Medical issues, RX, OTC meds, etc.)
10. Give split specimen testing options.
11. Answer appropriate questions.
12. Leave the MRO phone number.

This formula is mandatory in a workplace MRO review, but it is more of a guideline for MROs in recovery monitoring. In workplace testing, the MRO decides whether there is a legitimate and acceptable medical explanation for the confirmed laboratory result. If there is, the MRO then downgrades that positive laboratory result to negative. We would never recommend that in recovery monitoring. In workplace the verifiable existence of a prescription is all that is required to downgrade that laboratory positive. Still, in monitoring, even if the prescription exists, it may not be allowed in the program doing the testing. So, in recovery monitoring, a laboratory-confirmed positive result is never reported as negative, instead, it is reported as positive with an explanation, such as "verified prescription".

Split specimen testing is a necessary, basic aspect of all forensic testing. It is in place as a check on the laboratory that performed the initial testing to assure everybody that the first laboratory did not make a testing mistake. The split specimen is a second portion of the same urine, blood or hair specimen collected from the participant and is forwarded under chain of custody to a second laboratory that has comparable certifications and procedures and is reconfirmed for the analyte that was confirmed positive at the first laboratory.

MRO review in recovery monitoring is also collaborative, unlike workplace testing in which the review ends with the completion of the interview and the split specimen testing process. In monitoring, MROs frequently make recommendations to programs of appropriate laboratory follow up in case the program needs ongoing information. An example of that is the monitoring of someone who has stopped using marijuana. Marijuana positives may continue for weeks or even months after discontinuation of use, and MRO review in those cases is designed to advise programs if the subsequent positives are consistent with abstinence or not. Alcohol biomarker testing, which is rarely ever used in workplace testing, also frequently needs clarification and follow-up recommendations.

While formal MRO review can be useful, it is not always required in monitoring. It is an involved, formal process that may be more than is needed when simple result clarification or interpretation is the question. FSSolutions recommendation is to directly contact the RMS MRO department any time there is a question about a result. If a formal MRO review is appropriate, the MRO department will recommend that.

*For further information, please contact FSSolutions at 800-732-3784 or [info@FSSolutions.com](mailto:info@FSSolutions.com)*