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Clarification on Standard of 'Absolute Confidence' Required

The Academy of Clinical Science and Laboratory Medicine expresses its concern relating to the standard of 'absolute confidence' when reporting cervical smears in a screening programme.

Cervical screening and indeed other screening programmes are bringing significant healthcare benefit to the Irish population and their continuance must be supported.

Medical Scientists providing this service use their considerable professional skill and judgement in examining the slides presented. The quality assurance standards in Ireland include the review of each slide by more than one reviewer. The ISO 15189 standard, to which the Irish laboratories are accredited, accepts the concept of uncertainty of measurement. This does not dictate a standard of 'absolute confidence' in reporting.

The recent High Court Judgement requires clarification and consideration of its impact on this screening programme and all the clinical diagnostic services we provide.

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