



Commissioner's Corner

January 2024

QUESTION: How do I properly report null alleles and other alleles with differential expression?

ANSWER: According to ASHI standard D.5.2.6.4, laboratories must use HLA typing terminology that conforms to the latest report of the World Health Organization (WHO) Nomenclature Committee for factors of the HLA System, when reporting HLA typing.

For null alleles and other alleles with differential expression, their complete name must be used, even if the lab reports at lower fields, such as the first or second fields. To illustrate this, consider the following examples:

1. The relatively common DRB4*01:03:01:02N, cannot be truncated to DRB4*01:03:01N, DRB4*01:03N, DRB4*01N or simply say that is DR53 null. Comments may provide explanations on the clinical implications of these variants but according to WHO, the only allele recognized is the DRB4*01:03:01:02N. Therefore, its complete name must be reported.
2. Other examples of less common alleles, for which same rule applies are DPA1*01:03:01:01Q and A*03:01:01:02N.
3. Null alleles may have names with only two fields such as A*24:09N, depending on the region of the gene where the variant encodes for the premature stop codon or for mutation(s) leading to differential expression of the antigen.

Every time that these alleles are encountered is important to verify their names in IMGT website since allele names may change. An example is allele DRB5*01:08:01N which used to be named DRB5*01:08N before 2010.

In addition, many labs set the typing software they use for 3 or less fields. Therefore, the name of the allele may be displayed in a truncated form, which is incorrect to report.

This practice also applies, as much as possible, to reporting results for proficiency testing surveys.