

The recommendation of the Quality Task Group No. 59 "Decontamination of Containers", published in *Central Service* issue no. 2/2009, has been recalled and will be published again after revision. Please read also the explanation on p. 206. ◆

Recommendations by the Quality Task Group (60): Instrument Identification

The aim of this Recommendation is to provide the user with information on instrument identification. Identification should be conducted according to the state of the art, while ensuring that hygiene standards are maintained.

The background to this Recommendation is the growing criticism voiced in recent times during inspections, conducted by the supervisory authorities or for certification purposes, of the → **USE OF COLOUR RIBBONS** or similar identifier systems.

In principle a distinction is made between the following levels of instrument identification:

1. Serial number level

Individual number for identification of a special instrument or medical device (MD), e.g. as needed for unambiguous assignment of maintenance cycles, etc. (Comparable with the chassis number of an automobile.)

This individual number is already most likely imprinted on the instruments as it will have been affixed by the manufacturer (e.g. on optics, motor systems).

2. Article number level

The article number clearly designates the instrument type; it must be assigned and affixed by the MD manufacturer.

Similar MDs by different manufacturers have different article numbers.

3. Department number level/tray level/etc.

This is a user-specific identifier used for further identification purposes. It can be affixed by the user or by a service provider.

Type of identification systems

Identification systems can be applied using the methods described in table 1, inter alia.

Summary:

A colour identification system lends itself only to → **RAPID VISUAL IDENTIFICATION**, e.g. assignment to particular areas.

The other identification methods provide for serialisation and are generally more difficult to apply. Rapid visual assignment to particular areas is possible only to an extent.

What type of identifier is affixed to MDs will depend on the → **INTENDED USE**. The following issues should be clarified in advance:

1. What do I want to achieve with identification?
2. What is my budget?
3. What logistic demands does a particular technology make on me?
4. What consequential costs must I bear?

In principle, MD identification should take account of the user's entire logistical set-up and of the codes already in use. Before affixing an identifier to an instrument, any impracticalities (e.g. ask user) should be clarified since the MD identifier will be a permanent fixture and can only be removed in some cases, and then with considerable difficulty. ◆

→ **THE USE OF COLOUR RIBBONS** is often criticized during inspections by the supervisory authorities.

Levels of instrument identification

→ **RAPID VISUAL IDENTIFICATION** can be reached by a colour identification system. This is possible for other identification methods only to a certain extent.

→ **THE INTENDED USE** is important to decide what type of identification method should be used.

Technology	Pros	Cons
Anodising	Clear colour identification Strong bond	Expensive Only externally
Electrolytic signature (Fig. 1)	Easy to use Good price/performance ratio On site by user	Demanding process if serialised
Attached colour identifiers	Clear colour identification Easy to use Low cost	Cannot be used universally Discuss handling with user
Colour plugs	Colour identification Can be applied by user after training	Time consuming to apply Cannot be used universally Intervention into instrument
Synthetic coating (Fig. 2)	Clear colour identification	Limited useful life Can only be applied externally Expensive
Laser marking (Fig. 3)	Variable Can be applied by user after training Electronically readable	Demanding in terms of apparatus needed Expensive to purchase
Needle and imprint technology (Fig. 4)	Can be applied by user after training Electronically readable	Passivation layer may be damaged Hampers cleaning
RFID	Barrier-free reading Futuristic technology Electronically readable	Not yet fully developed

Table 1

