

# From the President – January 2024

Welcome to the January issue of the Bulletin.

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**Another year, but many of the same challenges across healthcare, pathology and the College still exist. This is unlikely to change anytime soon as there are no easy fixes. However, there is much we can do collectively to help ensure pathology services remain viable and to protect the welfare of both patients and staff. The Bulletin will continue to showcase many of these initiatives throughout 2024.**

## 2024 – challenges and opportunities...

Workforce planning needs a complete overhaul, especially given the existing and predicted staffing shortfall in the coming years as we see a slow release of backlog activity on a background of an increasingly unhealthy and ageing UK population. The College, pathology services and the various NHS bodies and organisations need to work together to ensure a strong case is made based on need and supported by clear metrics.

Political upheaval is very much with us with the UK election this year. Once the dust has settled, the College will engage strongly with the incoming government to ensure that the importance of pathology is realised and we can compete for the limited funds that will be available.

Collaboration across the whole pathology community is more important than ever. The newly strengthened Pathology Alliance will bring together pathology associations and industry to allow a stronger presence, provide a collective voice, combine resources and avoid re-inventing the wheel every time.

**Pathology needs a plan.** Existing plans developed by others are useful but we end up being reactive and frustrated by a lack of funding and a mandate to implement. We need a new pathology plan – **a plan for pathology by pathology**. The College will be driving this important piece of work in 2024 and it will cover all areas of pathology practice.

Wellbeing is of fundamental importance for those working across pathology, especially as the imbalance between workforce and workload is primed to get significantly worse. We all need to ensure we have relevant metrics and systems for measuring our contributions, robust job planning and support mechanisms that help ensure we stay sane, fit and healthy. The College will aim to improve and build on these goals.

The College recognises that some fellows feel disconnected from the work of the College. While some of this is due to a lack of visibility of all the great things the College does and why it is so important, we also realise that a re-focus is needed on strategic areas that are of value to our members, pathology services and patients. At the same time, we need to manage our finances to ensure we are getting the most out of our income streams.

Finally, I wish you all the best for 2024. Although it may be a difficult year for us all professionally we have a huge opportunity to work collectively to improve pathology services and our professional lives.

2024 – let's take our opportunities to meet the challenges...

## **Our new honorary officers**

I am delighted to be working with a new team of honorary officers. As ever, a wide base of expertise and diversity continues to lead and represent the College at this level. Three new Vice Presidents – Dr Noha El-Sakka (Communications), Professor Marta Cohen (Learning) and Dr Laszlo Igali (Professional Practice) – have taken up their posts. They will be highlighted in future Bulletin issues throughout 2024 and you can read more about their backgrounds on our [website](#).

Professor Sarah Coupland has moved to Registrar, while Dr Stephen Morley and Dr John Ashcroft remain as Assistant Registrar and Treasurer, respectively. Meanwhile a whole new raft of chairs have come in to many of the College committees. I welcome you all and look forward to working with you.



**From left to right: Dr Noha El-Sakka (Vice President for Communications), Professor Marta Cohen (Vice President for Learning) and Dr Laszlo Igali (Vice President for Professional Practice).**

## King's New Year Honours

Several College fellows have been recognised in the recent New Year Honours – many congratulations to them all.

### Members of the Order of the British Empire

- Dr Michael Bartlett, Medical Educator, Hywel Dda Health Board and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. For services to medical education.
- Dr Shara Cohen, Founder and CEO of Mums in Science. For dedication to women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (stem) and cancer patient support.
- Dr Christopher Paul Johnson, Forensic Pathologist, Home Office. For services to criminal justice.
- Professor Mark Harvey Wilcox, Lately National Clinical Director for Infection Prevention and Control, NHS England and Chair, SAGE Sub-Committee on Hospital Onset Covid Infection. For services to healthcare, particularly during COVID-19.

### Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire

- Professor Carol Mary Black, Independent Adviser on Combating Drugs. For public service.

## Pathology Portal Outstanding Innovation Award 2023

We were all delighted to learn that the Pathology Portal won the Outstanding Innovation Award at the prestigious [Healthcare Honours awards 2023](#) in November.

Many congratulations to Professor Jo Martin and the College's Pathology Portal team for this great achievement, which recognises the huge work that has gone into this and the significant benefit it brings to pathology learning and knowledge.



**Professor Jo Martin, Pathology Portal Lead, and Luke Thrower, Pathology Portal Officer, attending the award ceremony.**

## **New Memorandum of Understanding signed**

In November, the College signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health-Kurdistan region, Iraq, and Kurdistan Higher Council of Medical specialties to help improve standards, training and practices in pathology and laboratory medicine in this region. We were able to host His Excellency Dr Saman Hussein Muhammad, Minister of Health, and colleagues at the College for both a meeting and a tour of lab facilities at Imperial College.



## Environment and sustainability

The College hosted the 'How Green is your Lab' meeting on 8 December 2023, organised by NHS England. A variety of speakers across the professions spoke at this meeting and highlighted the importance of driving sustainability across our services – not just the way in which our labs use and consume waste/energy, but also how and when our tests are used, which impacts sustainability across wider clinical pathways. Climate change is real and the impact on healthcare is also real. There is much that we can do to ensure we minimise the effect of our services on the environment. Our April issue of the Bulletin will focus on climate change, lab sustainability and pathology.

## Digital pathology and artificial intelligence

I was able to attend several ministerial level meetings recently on artificial intelligence (AI). This included co-chairing a meeting at 10 Downing Street with the Royal College of Radiologists. In this meeting we emphasised that, for AI to fulfil its potential and before AI innovations can be widely tested, trained and implemented, there will need to be widespread implementation of digital pathology and functional laboratory IT systems.



Professor Darren Treanor was able to speak on digital pathology, while Dr Ellie Dow spoke on the potential for intelligent algorithms in blood sciences. Importantly, AI will not replace pathologists but will allow more efficient working practices, facilitating easier sharing of information and faster, more appropriate patient pathways.

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## **Our award-winning Pathology Portal**

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## **Our international work in focus – South East Asia**

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