



The Royal College of Pathologists

Pathology: the science behind the cure

## RCPATH President's newsletter - February 2024



### President's Message

#### **New College Strategy – Its all about the workforce....**

There is a hint of Spring in the air, and with that comes a renewed focus on College strategy for the coming year and beyond. Much of this will focus on maintaining the integrity and viability of the College and ensuring that much valued College income is spent wisely and productively. Externally, our output will of course continue to facilitate examinations, assessments, guidelines and many other 'business as usual' workstreams, but we must now begin to focus more on the things that are important to our members, fellows and of course to healthcare provision.

The workforce crisis that we now see within both the NHS and social care has not come as a surprise, being both predictable and obvious in its evolution in recent years. Pathology services are very much at risk given the emerging workforce/workload imbalance that many of us deal with on a daily basis. For some of our services this is already very acute; more than one third of paediatric & perinatal pathologist posts lie vacant, severely impacting service delivery. Meanwhile training posts are not being filled in this specialty. The College is working very hard with NHS England and many other stakeholders to try to alleviate this situation as quickly as possible – but it is hard.

Workforce planning requires good, accurate data on the existing workforce, along with the ability to measure existing and future



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workload. This information is very difficult to get. College surveys, especially with low response rates, can only scratch the surface and so working collaboratively with the NHSs across all 4 nations, along with other stakeholders, to build up an accurate picture of what we need will be a clear focus for the College over the next few years, and beyond. Workforce plans, such as the NHS England long-term workforce plan (2023), are a good start, allowing train, retain and reform pillars to be considered. The commitment to double the number of medical students must also be welcomed, but this won't directly help Pathology without significant expansion in training posts and Consultant posts so that we can build the workforce that is needed in the future. There is no financial commitment to this from either Government or indeed any other political party that may form the next Government. It is vital therefore that we build strong arguments using valid workforce planning data to support this need and compete with the many other bids for limited funding.

No one likes to talk about contingency, and very few are, however the reality is that the timescale for reversing the emerging workforce crisis stretches way beyond the here and now. We need to therefore consider carefully what we focus on within our services and pathways so as to prioritise what is most important now – this will be difficult but will be happening across all healthcare sectors within the NHS. In addition, we need to also prepare for the added impact of increasingly troublesome supply chain issues affecting our services and of course the impending regulatory changes that will limit or even remove many of our products, tests and analysers from the market in the coming years.

So there is a lot to do and the College will be front and centre in this. We do however hugely depend on all of your input, support and collaboration to make this happen – it is absolutely in all of our interests.

## **MedLab Middle East Medical Expo & Conference – Dubai, UAE, February 5-8<sup>th</sup> 2024.**

I was delighted to attend this large scientific meeting and trade exhibition along with Vice-President Noha Elsakka and members of the College International Team. I was able to give a keynote talk on the importance of appropriate pathology testing, while there were several other talks from other College fellows attending. We also [had a stand](#) at the trade exhibition and ran a workshop for existing and potential College members.

While in Dubai, we were able to also [visit the Mohammed Bin Rashid University](#) and re-sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a commitment to liaise and support ongoing pathology training and education. We also took time to tour a pathology laboratory facility and meet staff, many of whom were College fellows.

A quarter of College fellows work overseas, so it is important that we are represented, when possible, at external events; meeting fellows, encouraging prospective new fellows and assisting where possible to help improve the healthcare provision in other countries.

### **The role of artificial intelligence in diagnostics**

Following a meeting at No 10 Downing Street we co-chaired with the Royal College of Radiologists, we have published [a report](#) on the potential of AI in the NHS.

AI can free up time for pathologists, improve laboratory workflow, enhance the accuracy of diagnosis and make patient pathways more efficient, but it will not replace the need for pathologists.

A great deal of work is also needed to get to the point where AI is fully developed and used safely in the NHS. Investment in digital pathology, joined up functional IT systems which facilitate information sharing across organisations and realise the potential of integrated pathology test result algorithms, as well as training for pathologists to understand and use AI, will all need to be put in place.

## **Parliamentary and stakeholder engagement**

Following [evidence](#) we submitted, I spoke at the Health and Social Care Committee Expert Panel regarding their [evaluation](#) of government progress on implementing recommendations on patient safety. The main areas covered in the session included: Maternity care and leadership, training of staff in health and social care, safety culture and whistleblowing. I was able to highlight the important job that Medical Examiners are now doing, albeit delayed for many years due to lack of funding, with the College now responsible for training over 2000 MEs. I was also able to make the point that due to deterioration in standards and limited capacity across the NHS, many associated patient safety issues that would have been alarming several years ago are now accepted to be part of normal expectations – especially around waiting times, emergency delays and trolley waits across departments and wards.

## **Westminster Health Forum on the priorities and next steps for tackling antimicrobial resistance in the UK**

In January College Fellow and veterinary Pathology Specialist Advisory Committee (SAC) Chair, Professor Roberto La Ragione, spoke at a [WHF conference](#). Professor La Ragione's talk focused on priorities and next steps for tackling antimicrobial resistance in the UK and covered the responsible use of antimicrobials in animals.

The WHF organises senior-level conferences on public policy relating to health and healthcare issues.

**Dr Bernie Croal**  
**President, The Royal College of Pathologists**  
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In this issue:

- [PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE](#)
- [WORKING FOR MEMBERS](#)
- [GET INVOLVED AT THE COLLEGE](#)
- [NEW PUBLICATIONS](#)
- [REGIONAL NEWS](#)
- [COLLEGE CONFERENCES AND EVENTS](#)
- [NEWS FROM EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS](#)
- [OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST](#)

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## Working for members

### Cancer screening

As part of Cervical Cancer Prevention Week, we featured a spotlight blog on the Cervical Screening London (CSL) team at Health Services Laboratories who process and test over 700,000 samples a year in our [service spotlight blog](#)

### The Pathology Portal

The Pathology Portal now hosts an extensive collection of over 5,000 resources, including diverse cases, informative videos, podcasts, quizzes, and more. [The Learning Hub](#) has also been continuing their development of the platform with a range of bug fixes to improve the experience and usability for both users and content providers.

These resources are supporting the professional development of a userbase of over 2,700 members. If you have not yet signed up to the Pathology Portal, more information is available on the [College website](#).

Your ongoing support is appreciated and the team is interested to hear your feedback, questions, suggestions, or content at [pathologyportal@rcpath.org](mailto:pathologyportal@rcpath.org)

### CPD Deadline reminder

We offer CPD statements for our members through our CPD returns process to help you assemble supporting information for [revalidation](#).

Although our CPD year ends at the end of March, you have until 30 September to submit your CPD return. Please submit your return [here](#) when you are ready.

For further information contact the Member Engagement and Support Team via phone at 020 7451 6720 or by email: [cpd@rcpath.org](mailto:cpd@rcpath.org)

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## Apply to be a Portfolio Pathway (formerly CESR) Assessor

If you are interested in becoming involved with the College, becoming a Portfolio Pathway assessor is a good way to do so. The Portfolio Pathway assessors determine whether or not each Portfolio Pathway applicant meets the knowledge, skills and experience required to practise as a specialist in the UK for their specialty. Assessors will either recommend applicants for entry to the Specialist Register or outline what more needs to be done to meet the standard. Training and ongoing support will be provided, and assessors can self-accredit for CPD points for each Portfolio Pathway evaluation they undertake.

A role description and further information is available on the [College website](#). If you would like to apply, please send an email outlining how you meet the person specification, along with an abbreviated CV, to [training@rcpath.org](mailto:training@rcpath.org)

## International

### Country Advisors in the Sub-Saharan Africa region

We are currently recruiting for Country Advisors in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. The application will close on 23 February 2024. To find out more about the countries we are recruiting for and information about the post, [please follow this link](#).

## New publications

### New consultation

[Dataset for histopathological reporting of cancer of unknown primary and malignancy of unknown primary origin](#) (closes 28 February).

### New consultations

- [Dataset for histopathological reporting of cancer of unknown primary and malignancy of unknown primary origin](#) (closes 28 February)
- [Guidance on the reporting of thyroid cytology specimens](#) (closes 27 February)
- [Best practice recommendations: Staffing and workload for cellular pathology departments](#) (closes 1 March).

## College Courses

### [Transfusion Lab management - Introductory themes and case studies](#)

**7pm, Tuesday 19 March 2024**

**CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)**

The College is hosting a series of webinars on management in transfusion. These webinars will provide an insight into the transfusion lab and give an overview of the key topics that clinical and scientific trainees should be aware of for the FRCPath Part I and II exams, together with example cases encountered in day-to-day transfusion practice.

This webinar will look at the role of the transfusion lab - provision of compatible blood products and safe transfusion; major haemorrhage, quality assurance, approach to investigation of incidents

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This event will take place at 7.00pm and last approximately 1 hour.

**[Fungal Update - Fungal infections in haematology-oncology patients](#)**

**1pm, Thursday 21 March 2024**

**CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)**

Invasive fungal disease (IFD) is a significant cause of mortality in patients with malignancies or post haemopoietic stem cell transplantation. The spectrum of fungi causing IFDs is broad and antifungal resistance is increasingly common. Imaging, culture and microscopical examination of bronchoalveolar lavage, blood and tissue biopsy specimens and remain the mainstay of diagnosis, but molecular methods are increasingly being used. Susceptibility testing of all clinically relevant isolates is increasingly important. Biomarkers are used for screening and monitoring treatment response. Treatment requires a multidisciplinary approach. Surgical debridement is often an important component. Other management strategies include control of the underlying disease and predisposing factors where possible, augmentation of the host response and the reduction of immunosuppression. Carefully selected antifungal therapy, guided by susceptibility testing, is critical to cure.

This event will take place at 1:00pm and last approximately 1 hour.

**[Transfusion Lab management - More advanced case studies](#)**

**1pm, Wednesday 27 March 2024**

**CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)**

The Royal College of Pathologists are hosting a series of webinars on management in transfusion. These webinars will provide an insight into the transfusion lab and give an overview of the key topics that clinical and scientific trainees should be aware of for the FRCPath Part I and II exams, together with example cases encountered in day to day transfusion practice. This webinar will look at contingency planning, blood shortages; Complex and rare antibodies etc

This event will take place at 1pm and last approximately 1 hour.

**[Can we beat respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) - what's new and what's on the horizon?](#)**

**12.30pm, Monday 15 April 2024**

**CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)**

This talk will provide a summary of the current treatments and preventative vaccines/monoclonal antibodies for RSV infection as well as those that are in development.

This event will take place at 12:30pm and last approximately 1 hour.

**[Defining Adverse Effects in Non-clinical Toxicity Studies](#)**

**12.30pm, Wednesday 17 April 2024**

**CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)**

This webinar will focus on the identification and characterisation of hazards, identified for drugs in development, in preparation for 'first in man' clinical trials.

This event will take place at 12:30pm and last approximately 1 hour.

**[Penicillin allergy/GA allergy/drug allergy update – Webinar](#)**

**12.30pm, Friday 19 April 2024**

**CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)**

The session will include an introduction on the basic clinical presentation and mechanisms of drug allergy before focusing on updates on penicillin allergy de-labelling and anaesthetic drug allergy. There has been a growth in interest in penicillin allergy de-labelling as most labels are in fact not correct, and there is associated harm by avoiding penicillin unnecessarily. There are, however,

several challenges with de-labelling in both specialist and non-specialist settings. Anaesthetic drug allergy has also attracted recent interest since the publication of the 6th National Audit Project (NAP6) of the Royal College of Anaesthetists. NAP6 highlighted significant need for change in practice. The session will provide an overview in these areas and finish with a panel question and answer session.

### **[New Consultants Day - virtual meeting](#)**

**Wednesday 24 April 2024**

**CPD credits: 6**

The New Consultants' Day is an event to help and support those recently appointed to a consultant post, or who will soon be taking one up. It is appropriate for all pathology specialties and for both medically-trained pathologists and clinical scientists.

You will hear from experienced consultants on a range of topics such as how to prepare a business case to secure resources, how to set up new services and how best to deal with complaints, and learn more about appraisal, revalidation and job planning (parallel session for medically-trained pathologists) and the experiences of consultant clinical scientists (parallel session for clinical scientists), among other things. It is most suitable for those appointed to a consultant post within the last year, or who expect to be appointed to a consultant post within the next year.

### **Medical examiner training**

The College is the [lead medical royal college for medical examiners](#) and provides training for any doctor wishing to work as a medical examiner. Participants will need to complete mandatory 26 e-learning modules and attend an entire face-to-face training day to receive a certificate of completion. The day includes short presentations, small group discussions of case scenarios and the opportunity to share experience. Medical Examiner Training is open only to medically qualified individuals who work in England and Wales.

New medical examiners who successfully complete the training and the e-learning modules will be invited to join the College as members.

### **[Medical Examiner training – In-person](#)**

**Thursday 6 June 2024**

**CPD credits: 6**

### **[Medical Examiner training – Virtual](#)**

**Thursday 26 September 2024**

**CPD credits: 6**

### **[Medical Examiner training – Virtual](#)**

**Wednesday 4 December 2024**

**CPD credits: 6**

### **Medical examiner officer training**

The College also leads on the training of [medical examiner officers](#) (MEOs).

MEOs work closely with medical examiners and undertake tasks such as coordinating the completion of death certificates and referrals to the coroner, and speaking to clinicians and bereaved families.

MEOs may come from a wide range of backgrounds. For example, nurses, healthcare scientists or bereavement officers although this list is not exhaustive. More information, including a [model job description, is on the College website.](#)

The face-to-face training day is the second part of MEO training. Everyone attending the course must have completed the 26 mandatory core e-learning modules before the date of the course to get the



most out of the training day. The e-learning modules [can be accessed here](#). (Registration with e-Learning for Healthcare is required.)

### [Medical examiner officer training session – Virtual Training](#)

**Thursday 9 May 2024**

CPD credits: 6

### [Medical examiner officer training session – Virtual Training](#)

**Thursday 17 October 2024**

CPD credits: 6

## News from other organisations

### **Bowel Cancer UK report: Unlocking the potential of Lynch syndrome services**

Bowel Cancer's [new report](#) found that, across the UK:

- There have been significant improvements in genetic testing for bowel cancer patients, with an average of 9 in 10 newly diagnosed bowel cancer patients being tested over the last financial year, but workforce and capacity issues are still barriers.
- Half of health authorities who responded, reported that family members of people with Lynch syndrome aren't offered letters they can take to their GP, which is one route to accessing genetic counselling and testing.
- Although surveillance is offered to all Lynch syndrome patients in England through the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme, only 6 in 10 health authorities across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland offering surveillance colonoscopies in line with clinical guidelines.

### **The Ethics of AI in Healthcare - A UK Doctor Survey**

If you are a GMC-registered doctor in the UK, please take 5 minutes to participate in *The Ethics of AI in Healthcare - A UK Doctor Survey*, a pivotal research project by an Academic Foundation Doctor.

Your insights will not only contribute to cutting-edge research but also empower the medical community to have a say in the dynamic realm of AI development. The survey covers ethical considerations that accompany AI implementation in healthcare.

The survey will help us in the vital exploration of the intersection between medicine and technology. To fill in the survey please visit: [The Ethics of AI in Healthcare](#).

## Other external events of interest

18-23 February 2024

[Genomics and Clinical Virology](#)

27 February 2024

[BSAC Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing \(AST\) - Hot Topics Webinar series 2024](#)

Our full programme of CPD events can be found on the members' [website](#).

RCPATH CPD accredited online resources can be found at the following [link](#)