



The Royal College of **Pathologists**

Pathology: the science behind the cure

RCPATH President's newsletter – December 2024



President's Message

As 2024 draws to a close and 2025 beckons, we find many of our services stretched but still managing to deliver vital diagnostics and clinical services across healthcare. We have to be hopeful that the necessary staffing, equipment and organisational structures can evolve to deal with the increasing and changing workload that we are likely to face in the coming years – the College will continue to be very important in building this case and ensuring our professional voice is heard, understood and acted upon.

In 2025 we will see further development of our workforce strategy including better data collection and communications output. Diagnostic stewardship will also be an important part of the equation to better ensure testing is appropriate. We will also seek to further develop our links with industry, working with corporate partners and through the Pathology Alliance, strengthen the professional voice of pathology.

The challenge is tough, but better training, better retention, reform of services, and better contingency planning will mean increased efficiency and productivity – much needed to offset the expected rise in sample volume and complexity. We need to be optimistic that this will

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come and that we can make the changes to take best advantage and push our services forward.

NHS 10-year plan (England)

[I was very pleased to be able to share our response to the Government's 10-Year Health Plan with you earlier this month.](#)

Our overall message is that pathology is essential for healthcare, vital for patients and a cornerstone for the [Government's 10-year plan](#). The three shifts to prevention, digitisation and the community will all rely on pathology services that are equipped with the relevant workforce, infrastructure, estate, and IT.

Although this plan applies only to England, there are a number of common themes that are shared by pathologists wherever they work and whichever specialty, and I encourage you to read our findings.

I would also like to thank all those of you who provided evidence for our submission, sharing your views, experiences and ideas.

Genomics

Cellular Pathology and Genomics: Partnering for Precision Medicine conference.

We recently hosted the [Cellular Pathology and Genomics: Partnering for Precision Medicine conference](#). The event, sponsored by AstraZeneca, Lilly and Illumina, promoted closer working between cellular pathology, genomics and industry in the delivery of patient centred care. The full [programme](#) was developed by Sian Morgan, Chair of the College's Genomics Specialty Advisory Committee and delegates were a mix of RCPATH members, other healthcare professionals and stakeholders, and industry representatives. Many thanks to our sponsors and to the science journalist Vivienne Parry for her skilful chairing.

College response to Government's 5-Year action plan to tackle antimicrobial resistance

To mark [World Antimicrobial Awareness Week](#), we published our response to the UK government's second 5-year action plan to address antimicrobial resistance. The government's plan sets out a series of actions to reduce infections and the

unnecessary use of antimicrobials including antibiotics. It also commits to strengthen surveillance and improve the use of diagnostics. To support its members to deliver the plan's actions, we have detailed a series of recommendations for government and the NHS including investing in laboratory and infection specialist staff and improving the implementation of diagnostics. You can read our position statement here: [RCPATH publishes response to government's 5-year action plan to tackle antimicrobial resistance](#)

The Trouble(s) With Point of Care Testing – The Pathologist Magazine

I gave an [interview to The Pathologist](#) magazine about what we need in place to support safe and effective Point of Care Testing for patients.

Advancements in technology have enabled us to do things we could not do 10 years ago but we need to ensure that new technologies including POCT are sustainably funded and that our laboratories are overseeing procurement, training and quality assurance.

[College members welcome Defra officials to The University of Surrey Veterinary School](#)

College members Professor Roberto La Ragione and Kate English recently welcomed Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) representatives to the University of Surrey Veterinary School. The visitors were given a tour of teaching facilities and participated in a roundtable discussion focusing on the issues facing the veterinary pathology workforce. Everyone was in agreement about the vital role veterinary pathologists play in surveillance to address animal disease and protect animal and human health.

Membership survey

Thanks to all of you who took the time to complete the Member Survey 2024. Your feedback will provide a critical insight into your overall member experience and how we can improve our products and services. We are now starting to analyse the data and will report on our key findings and resulting recommendations in 2025.

Help shape the future of pathology: Complete our new workforce census launching in early 2025

The College has transformed its workforce census to better address the diverse needs of our 17 specialties. The census, developed in collaboration with an external research company, will launch in early 2025.

If you are a Fellow, Associate, Diplomate, Medical Examiner, Registered Trainee, or are working towards your FRCPath and work in the UK, you will receive a personalized invitation to participate. Your participation is crucial in helping us build an accurate and comprehensive picture of the pathology workforce.

For pathology's voice to be heard, it is vital that the College can collect and use data about pathology and pathologists as evidence for workforce planning and government/NHS plans. Our future services and professional well-being depend upon it. If you have any queries regarding the census please email workforce@rcpath.org

I wish you all the very best for the New Year and hope you get some downtime over the holidays.

Dr Bernie Croal
President, The Royal College of Pathologists
X: [@RCPPath](https://twitter.com/RCPPath)

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A PDF version of this newsletter is available at
[RCPATH newsletters](#)

Working for members

Learning Environment for Pathology Trainees (LEPT) Satisfaction Survey 2024

Is your specialty Chemical Pathology or one within the Cellular Pathology umbrella?

Do you use the LEPT system? If so, please could you take part in an anonymous survey to measure your satisfaction.

From your experience of the LEPT system, we are keen to know whether you find it easy to use and comprehensible and to ask you for ideas about changes you might like to see introduced. Your feedback will contribute to further incremental LEPT developments which will be beneficial to all LEPT users.

This survey will remain open for completion until the extended deadline of **Monday 6 January at 5pm**. The analysis of the survey will be published on the College website; you will be alerted when it is ready. Please visit- [LEPT satisfaction survey](#).

Educational Update meeting

The annual Educational Update meeting was held on Friday 8 November 2024. The theme was 'Reasonable Adjustments' led by an impressive line-up of speakers and attended by over 400 delegates. The recordings are now available on the College website on the 'Recordings' tab at: [Educational Update 2024](#)

[IBD report: The State of IBD Care in the UK, Crohn's & Colitis UK](#)

The report found that the quality of care reported by people with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) has declined over the past five years, with major resources needed to help NHS staff deliver the services needed to people with Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis. The College was a key partner in the development in the report.

[The Healthcare Professional Podcast - The State of IBD Care in the UK](#)

In this podcast explores the IBD UK report findings and recommendations. Geraldine Cooper speaks to gastroenterologist and IBD UK Benchmarking Lead Dr Barney Hawthorne and IBD Nurse Specialist Lisa Younge to give an overview of the report and findings.

Apply to be a Portfolio Pathway 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

The Pathology Portal

The Pathology Portal continues to grow as a resource for pathologists, offering over 6,000 educational materials spanning multiple specialties and providing case studies, lectures, recap videos, podcasts, and quizzes. Designed to support pathologists at all career stages, the portal has seen incredible engagement, with over 225,000 launches by more than 4,800 users from diverse professional backgrounds.

The Pathology Portal was presented at this year's Educational Update as well as the Advances in Transfusion Medicine Symposium, showcasing a range of uses for the Portal in teaching and education.

As we reach the end of the year, the team would like to extend our gratitude to our dedicated contributors and users for making the Pathology Portal such an important resource. Your feedback and submissions have also helped us to identify gaps, provide development support and build the networks which are helping to continuously improve the portal. We welcome your suggestions, questions, and content contributions at pathologyportal@rcpath.org If you haven't explored the Pathology Portal yet, visit the [College website](#). to join today.

International

Free international webinar series exploring Gross Examination and Frozen Section

In February 2025 the International Team will deliver a free 4-part webinar series from 5 – 26 February exploring a different aspect of Gross Examination and Frozen Section. The webinars will be 2 hours long with international speakers and a Q&A session at the end. If you're interested in learning more about this webinar series, please [visit this link](#) to the first webinar outlining the series.

Get involved in the College

Two vacant Chair roles - Prenatal, Perinatal and Paediatric Pathology Special Advisory Committee and the Dermatopathology Sub-Committee

The College is committed to setting and maintaining professional standards and promoting excellence in the teaching and practice of pathology, for the benefit of patients.

Those holding office in the College contribute to this important work by providing professional leadership and contributing at a national level to the maintenance and development of pathology services and the quality of patient care. Make a difference and help shape College activities and policies by building the profile of your specialty through our committee work. Information on the roles and how to apply can be found [here](#). Deadline for applications is Friday, 10 January 2025.

New publications

College Courses

[UKAS accreditation: the importance of clinical engagement with quality assurance – webinar](#)

1pm, Wednesday 8 January 2025

CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)

During this webinar our speakers Al Bryant and Dr Albert Mifsud will explain the role of UKAS accreditation, the requirements of the updated ISO 15189 standard, and the importance of having pathologists involved as technical assessors.

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

[Autopsy webinar series – Fire related deaths](#)

1pm, Wednesday 15 January 2025

CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)

This talk will cover all aspects of the autopsy examination of fire deaths including signs of smoke inhalation, fire damage to the tissues and common post mortem artefacts. Fires can be accidental, suicidal or homicidal in nature, so careful consideration of the background information in conjunction with the post mortem findings is required, and there will be reference as to when to contact the Coroner/Procurator Fiscal due to suspicious findings.

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

[Analytical considerations for detecting and quantifying novel synthetic opioids, including 'nitazenes', in biological samples](#)

1pm, Tuesday 21 January 2025

CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)

In recent years, novel synthetic opioids (NSOs) have been detected in drug seizures and in biological samples in the United Kingdom. These compounds are highly potent, and so keeping current with which compounds are in circulation in the illicit drug market in the UK, and how best to detect them in a range of samples is important to inform public health decisions, and to minimise the risk of false negative analyses. This webinar will discuss the analytical considerations for maximising detection of a range of these compounds, including how to attempt to keep ahead of newly-emerging analogues.

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

[The role of pathology in farm animal disease surveillance – webinar](#)

12.30pm, Wednesday 22 January 2025

CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)

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

[Cytology of the Respiratory System and Thorax - webinar](#)

1pm, Wednesday 5 February 2025

CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)

The talk will involve canine and feline case presentations of various pathologic processes of the respiratory system and thorax, with real-time viewing of digital slides via screen-sharing. Samples studied may include respiratory washes, thoracic effusions and FNAs of solid masses of the nasal passages, lungs and mediastinum. The talk is aimed at residents training in clinical pathology, medicine and oncology. Residents training in anatomic pathology and veterinary practitioners with an interest in cytology may also find it relevant.

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

[Autopsy webinar series – Pulmonary fibrosis](#)

1pm, Wednesday 12 February 2025

CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)

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

[Autopsy webinar series – Deaths in water](#)

1pm, Wednesday 19 March 2025

CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)

This talk will address how to use the 'surgical sieve' approach when performing a post-mortem examination on a body recovered from water. Topics such as how the body came to be in the water, what occurred in the water and how one can establish pathological features of drowning will be covered. This event will take place via zoom at 1:00pm and last approximately 1 hour.

[Autopsy webinar series – Cardiac pathology for the non-specialist](#)

1pm, Wednesday 9 April 2025

CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)

Cardiac pathology remains some of the most common pathology encountered at autopsy. This webinar will cover common and uncommon cardiac pathology which the non-specialist pathologist can recognise, practical tips about examining the heart, and when and how to refer to a cardiac pathologist.

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

[Epithology: pathology and epidemiology in conservation medicine](#)

1pm, Wednesday 30 April 2025

CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)

Pathology is an ever-growing field within zoo and wildlife medicine as much of the knowledge of many species comes from performing postmortem examinations. However, in times of small case reports for certain species, epidemiology plays a key role in identifying patterns within those findings to compile information that helps us learn more about the species so that we may help the living. This event will take place via zoom at 1:00pm and last approximately 1 hour.

[Autopsy webinar series – Sepsis](#)**1pm, Wednesday 21 May 2025****CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)**

Sepsis is an inflammatory response, generally triggered by microbes, in which a cascade of molecules has a wide range of effects. The metabolic responses to these compounds have an important physiological role, but can lead to overwhelming clinical changes and death, especially in the already vulnerable or frail individual. The underlying source of sepsis may be obvious, but in up to 40% of cases, it is not. In such cases, detailed understanding of the clinical history is very important. There are recognised microscopic changes, but these vary in degree, and can be very difficult to identify in the decomposing body, even in the early stages. This event will take place via zoom at 1:00pm and last approximately 1 hour.

[Autopsy webinar series – Neuropathology for the non-specialist](#)**1pm, Wednesday 11 June 2025****CPD credits: 1 (self-credited)**

This webinar will cover macroscopic and microscopic neuropathology which a general autopsy pathologist can diagnose, when to refer to a neuropathologist, and practical tips about what to refer. This event will take place at 1:00pm and last approximately 1 hour.

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 – Virtual](#)**Thursday, 16 January 2025****CPD credits: 6****[Medical Examiner training – Virtual](#)****Tuesday, 25 March 2025****CPD credits: 6****[Medical Examiner training – In-person](#)****Thursday, 5 June 2025****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 – Virtual](#)

Tuesday, 4 March 2025

CPD credits: 6

News from other organisations

Bowel Cancer UK report - [Delivering the ambitions of the NHS Long Term Plan: A review of progress of bowel cancer in England](#).

The report found that despite the significant disruption to cancer services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NHS England has made considerable progress in meeting the bowel cancer specific commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan specifically with the age extension of the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme, significant improvement of testing for Lynch syndrome as well as personalised care plans for cancer patients. However, progress on early diagnosis of bowel cancer has not shifted and bowel cancer patients are facing longer waits than most cancers to begin treatment.

Alastair Campbell headlines the Global AI Conference 2025

Alastair Campbell, renowned writer, strategist, communicator and co-host of the Rest is Politics podcast, will headline a groundbreaking closing keynote panel discussion at the Global AI Conference 2025, organised by the Royal College of Radiologists and partnered by the College. Alongside top NHS leaders and government officials, Professor Erika Denton, Mr Dominic Cushnan and Dr Katharine Halliday, Alastair will chair the debate on the potential of AI integration in the modern NHS.

Join in-person in London on 3–4 February 2024 or participate online to explore the latest advancements in AI and its transformative potential for healthcare. Whether you're an experienced practitioner or just starting out, the conference offers a unique opportunity to learn from global AI leaders, gain valuable insights and networking with peers. For more info and how to book [visit Global AI conference](#).

Other external events of interest

21-22 January 2025

[Post American Society of Haematology \(ASH\) Significant Highlights](#)

22 January 2025

[Journal Club webinar - It's in the water? Addressing risks from healthcare water systems](#)

29 January 2025

[Post American Society of Haematology \(ASH\) Highlights for Scotland - What's New in Haematological Malignancies](#)

02-07 February 2025

[Genomics and Clinical Microbiology course](#)

03-05 February 2025

[Leeds Lymphoma Course](#)

04-05 February 2025

[The British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy \(BSAC\) & The Global Antibiotic Research & Development Partnership \(GARDP\) Antimicrobial Chemotherapy Conference \(ACC2025\)](#)

10-11 February 2025

[London Endocrine Pathology Update](#)

11 February 2025

[Post International Society of Thrombosis and Haemostasis \(ISTH\) & American Society of Haematology \(ASH\) Headlines](#)

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