



BREAST PATHOLOGY

I took over from Professor Ian Ellis as the Sub-Specialty Advisor for Breast Pathology and would like to thank Ian for his contribution to the role.

Issues related to Breast Pathology in the UK are dealt with by the National Coordinating Committee for Breast Pathology (NCCBP). This committee is chaired by Professor Ian Ellis. The Sub-Specialty Advisor for Breast Pathology is co-opted into the committee, if not already a member. It has sub-groups responsible for Information, Quality Assurance, Non-operative Diagnosis, Education & Training and Research. The Committee provides oversight for the National External Breast Pathology Interpretive External Quality Assurance Scheme.

Workforce planning, Training and Education,

Breast Pathology is a popular specialty amongst cellular pathology trainees however, there still exists a relative shortage nationally at Consultant level. Breast cancer has been and will continue for the foreseeable future to be a focus for molecularly targeted therapy. It is likely that multiplex/comprehensive molecular methods based on deep sequencing will play an increasing role in breast (and other) cancers. Pathologists are likely to play a lead role in integration of cancer related data for therapeutic use. Not convinced there is sufficient training in molecular methods currently to meet this demand.

Going forward, there is likely to be an increased demand due to age extension of the screening programme, increased detection of cancers and changing demographics with an ageing population.

Complex oncoplastic surgical procedures and increased use of neoadjuvant therapy make it more time consuming to deal with increasing the burden on pathologists.

Research and Clinical Trial Issues

The NCCBP continues to contribute to the research agenda via the Research Sub-Group and has actively contributed to the Sloane Project.

Breast Cancer is an active area of research in the UK and almost every laboratory that deals with breast cancer specimens will be involved in some way. However CRUK and other research organisations have raised concerns that there are fewer pathologists available or interested in supporting research and clinical trials.

Concerns have also been raised by pathologists about how to capture [collecting and sending blocks for trials as workload data](#). The feeling amongst many Breast Pathologists is that there has



been an exponential rise in the number of trials requiring Pathology support. While this generally needs to be encouraged, the increase has not been backed by an increase in resources, especially in non-academic departments, where staffing to support research activities can sometimes be negligible.

College/NHSBSP Documents

The NCCBP is currently revising both main documents relating to Breast Pathology, including the minimum dataset (Pathology Reporting of Breast Disease & Non-operative Diagnosis of Breast Cancer). There has been a delay in finalising the Pathology reporting of Breast Disease as the writing group was asked to wait till the RCPATH/CQC review at Sherwood Hospitals Foundation Trust had published its report. This guideline is now ready for consultation.

It is anticipated that both documents will be out for consultation soon.

Issues affecting Service delivery and Service Reconfiguration

Following publication of the CQC/RCPATH report regarding ER staining issues at Sherwood Forest Hospitals Trust and in response to setting of Peer Review standards, numerous discussions are being held around minimum reporting numbers both for primary breast cancer specimens as well as for specialized tests such as ER.

Educational activities & Audit

The educational sub-group of the NCCBP organizes an Annual Breast Pathology Update Course each year.

The College could host a study day/update (more days if greater demand) next year once the new Guidelines/ Minimum Dataset have been finalized.

The NCCBP is active in supporting regional and national audits. I am currently leading on the First Annual National Audit of Breast Pathology Performance within the NHSBSP.

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