



The Royal College of **Pathologists**

Pathology: the science behind the cure

Response from the Royal College of Pathologists to Optimising bowel cancer screening

The Royal College of Pathologists' written submission

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1 About the Royal College of Pathologists

1.1 The Royal College of Pathologists (RCPATH) is a professional membership organisation with charitable status. It is committed to setting and maintaining professional standards and to promoting excellence in the teaching and practice of pathology. Pathology is the science at the heart of modern medicine and is involved in 70 per cent of all diagnoses made within the National Health Service. The College aims to advance the science and practice of pathology, to provide public education, to promote research in pathology and to disseminate the results. We have over 10,000 members across 20 specialties working in hospital laboratories, universities and industry worldwide to diagnose, treat and prevent illness.

1.2 The Royal College of Pathologists response reflects comments made by Fellows and members

2 Response

The consultation focuses mainly on discussing rather broadly the various options, e.g. the optimum FIT threshold level; the viability of bowel scope; and above all the cost effectiveness of the options.

SECTION 1

Page 5

The document suggests that several options are possible, one of which would result in almost double the number of procedures. In practice the number of endoscopy staff has been a barrier to various forms of expansion in the past.

SECTION 5.3.1.

Page 29.

There is very little about pathology, and the document almost sidesteps the issue of pathology funding – saying “it is unclear...”. Anecdotally, this is often the Trust financial approach, i.e. hoping pathology will not be noticed and/or that pathology will not notice the extra few 1000 cases as they slowly appear.

The wording: “polypectomy will always involve a biopsy” is unlikely to have been written by a histopathologist.

The figure of £29 that is then quoted is quite low and its source is not entirely clear, i.e. “NHS reference costs” but with no citation. At the very least, resections would increase if there were an expansion of numbers initially and £29 is certainly not realistic for a resection. With a biopsy rate of around 40-45%, £29 for all pathology costs per endoscopic procedure (compared to £518 for colonoscopy costs for example) still seems low. £29 may cover pathology reporting but not processing and admin etc.