



The Royal College of **Pathologists**

Pathology: the science behind the cure

RCPATH President's newsletter – January 2025



President's Message

Tackling NHS waiting lists

The Government's recent proposals to tackle [NHS waiting lists across England](#) includes expanding the number of Community Diagnostic Hubs alongside extended opening hours, greater use of the private sector and making it easier for patients to choose where they want to be treated .

The waiting list currently stands at 7.5 million. The Government has set an ambitious target for 92% of patients to begin treatment or be given the all clear within 18 weeks, by the end of this Parliament. They have also pledged to reach a 65% target by March 2026, reducing the backlog by more than 450,000.

These are promising developments but are they deliverable?

Pathology services will be pivotal to delivering the government's ambition to turn around the NHS.

A well-resourced and fully staffed pathology service will be critical in meeting these targets and also those of the upcoming NHS 10-Year Health Plan. This includes addressing ongoing chronic staff shortages, rising workloads and a growing recruitment and retention gap through robust workforce planning and investing in the recruitment

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and training of pathologists and scientists as outlined in our [10 Year Plan submission](#).

This College is creating its own Pathology Plan outlining what we can do to address these issues across the whole of the UK. We will also continue to work to highlight the vital impact that pathology has on patient pathways when investment is made in the right places.

If we cannot deliver the best diagnostics and care possible, we need to ensure we can deliver the best care that we can, given the resource envelope we have to work in. Every day we make a huge impact on the lives of our patients, improving outcomes and saving lives. We should be very proud of all that we do.

Workforce Strategy 2025-2028

To enable our Pathology Plan, we have launched our new [Workforce Strategy 2025](#) – 2028.

Generation of data around current and future workforce and workload will be the foundation needed to both inform and advocate what we need to do across training, retention, and reforming pathology services. Where we identify a clear shortfall, then contingencies can be developed for consideration in order to optimise the impact of what we can deliver.

Our vision is clear: to have a sustainable pathology workforce that is provided with the right resources and the right support to deliver the highest quality of care for patients. You all have a role to play in helping the College achieve this.

The Long Term Workforce Plan

It will be almost two years this summer since the LongTerm Workforce Plan for England was published, with its welcomed headline act of producing more doctors – by expanding medical school places and developing apprenticeship routes. There were however some notable absences, with no mention of specialty training numbers or expansion of substantive consultant posts. Realisation, by the current Government, that funding is especially tight will, of course, inhibit its progress and likely delay the sequel to the plan, expected for summer this year. The apprenticeship

plan has already been cancelled, and the much needed expansion of specialty training in pathology is now highly unlikely.

Workforce Census 2025

The first step in delivering our workforce strategy is the launch of our new Workforce Census in February. All UK Fellows, Diplomates, Associates, Affiliates, Medical Examiners, registered trainees and candidates will be invited to complete it via email.

To provide the best possible data for workforce planning in your profession and specialty and to support our advocacy, we need responses from every invited participant. Your input is essential in shaping the future of pathology and is vital for our professional wellbeing.

Resident doctors seeking specialty training, are of course facing ever increasing competition for these posts. Significant unrest and social media exchanges are turning increasingly unpleasant, and this issue now threatens to become the next disruptor of healthcare.

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges is also concerned and while it is more of an issue for other Colleges our primary concern remains the lack of growth of training places which is exacerbating this issue, many Colleges have called for clarity and intervention to avoid a conflict. While doctor unemployment is rare, much reduced chances of becoming a consultant or a GP was not what medical students signed up for.

As a College we need to strongly support doctors with an interest or stake in pathology at all levels – medical students, foundation level, specialty trainees and SAS doctors all play important roles in our services and will be crucial for the future of pathology.

Engagement

Prof Sarah Coupland, College Registrar, attended a discussion meeting in parliament, 'How can Precision Prevention reduce the demand on the NHS?'. The event was organised by the [Parliamentary and Scientific committee](#) and was a

good opportunity to strengthen our ties with this committee and its Chair, George Freeman MP.

Republic of Ireland and Manchester

We have many valued members and fellows based in the Republic of Ireland. Their pathology trainees engage in the FRCPath exam as part of their training. I am delighted to be going to Dublin in a few weeks to meet members and speak at the Faculty of Pathology Symposium at the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.

I am also looking forward to participating in the Convensis NHS Pathology Conference in **Manchester** next week – topics include workforce, finance, networks and technology.

[The Pathologist - Prioritizing Investments](#)

The Pathologist magazine covered our submission [to the UK government's 10-year health plan](#) which highlights the key challenges facing pathology, including workforce shortages, outdated infrastructure, and inadequate IT systems.

[New year honours list](#)

I would like to congratulate all College members who were recognised in the New Year Honours. The awards are testament to their dedication and commitment to healthcare and the advancement of pathology through research and innovation.

Dr Bernie Croal
President, The Royal College of Pathologists
X: [@RCPath](#)

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

Working for members

Medical Examiner/Medical Examiner Officer Hub

[The College launched its ME/MEO Hub in December](#), an exclusive online community for medical examiner and medical examiner officer members of the College. The Hub provides a private space for members to network, share best practice and attend webinars. On 9 December we hosted a welcome event on the platform led by Dr Suzy Lishman, Senior Advisor on Medical Examiners, and Daisy Shale, Lead Medical Examiner for Wales. Over 170 members have now signed up and we are excited to see the community grow over the coming weeks.

[Essay competitions for undergraduates and foundation doctors](#)

We've opened our annual [Essay Prizes](#), the Hugh Platt Foundation Essay Prize and the Paola Domizio Undergraduate Essay Prize, for 2025. These competitions offer undergraduates, and foundation doctors in the UK the chance to take an in-depth look at a particular aspect of pathology through a written piece. This year's essay questions centre around innovation in pathology.

The winner of each competition will be awarded £250. They will also have their essay published on our website and in the College magazine, *The Bulletin*, and will be presented with a certificate at an RCPATH event. Please encourage undergraduates and foundation doctors you know to enter. The closing date for the Paola Domizio Undergraduate Essay Prize is 7 April and the closing date for the Hugh Platt Foundation Essay Prize is 12 May. Find out more including terms and conditions and how to enter on [our website](#).

Winners of the Percy Lane Oliver Memorial Award 2024

The College is delighted to announce that the winners of the Percy Lane Oliver Memorial Award 2024 (Medical Category) are [Dr Fiona Regan, Dr Shubha Allard and Dr Helen New](#) for their outstanding contribution to blood transfusion medicine.

The standard of applications was extremely high this year, and after much deliberation the panel awarded the prize to three recipients. All three were presented with their award at the RCPATH and SHOT Symposium held on 21 November 2024.

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 230,000 launches by more than 5,000 users!

The Pathology Portal has recently uploaded a catalogue of previous EQAs in Urology, as well as working with various individuals and groups to host content for teaching sessions and we are excited to be continuing this work in 2025. If you are interested in using the Pathology Portal for your EQA or would like support in using the Portal for educational sessions, please get in touch.

If you haven't explored the Pathology Portal yet, visit the [College website](#) to join today.

We welcome your suggestions, questions, and content contributions at pathologyportal@rcpath.org

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](#)

International

Revisit the highlights of international Pathology Day 2024

Our [roundup blog – celebrating international pathology day 2024](#) covers our conference in November, themed the 'Rise of Global Antimicrobial Resistance'. In partnership with [the British Society for Haematology \(BSH\)](#), this roundup captures the highlights of the presentations from eminent speakers and the roundtable discussion. You can also find out the winners of the poster competition.

Free international webinar series exploring Gross Examination and Frozen Section

In February 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.

New publications

[January 2025 Bulletin](#)

The January Bulletin explores paediatric pathology. The issue features articles on the impact of oral microbiology on dental health and the challenges faced in paediatric infection practice and laboratory medicine. The issue also includes updates on primary immune deficiencies, childhood vaccination and innovations in paediatric pathology, with an introduction from the Children's Commissioner.

[Member spotlight: an interview with Professor Angharad Davies, Bulletin Editor](#)

We spoke to the Bulletin Editor, Professor Angharad Davies, about her role, the value of the Bulletin for herself and the wider membership, and how to contribute your own pieces to the magazine.

Guidelines

The following guidelines have recently been published:

- [G055 Dataset for histopathological reporting of ocular retinoblastoma](#)
- [G183 Guidelines on autopsy practice: Precautions for high-risk infectious autopsies.](#)

The following guideline is in consultation. We welcome your feedback:

- [Guidelines in autopsy practice: Deaths in patients with epilepsy including sudden deaths.](#)

BPRs

The following BPRs have recently been published:

- [G177 BPR Histopathology and cytopathology of limited or no clinical value](#)
- [G136 BPR Standards for autopsy pathologists in post-mortem examinations of deaths that appear not to be suspicious](#)
- [G194 BPR Guidelines for the use of laboratory allergy testing in primary care.](#)

Good Practice Series

[Good Practice Series 18: Inherited cardiovascular conditions.](#)

College Courses

[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.

[Epipathology: 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](#)

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

Other external events of interest

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 \(ACC2025\)](#)

05 February 2025

[South West Lymphoma Group](#)

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