



The Royal College of Pathologists

Pathology: the science behind the cure

RCPATH President's newsletter – March 2024



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President's Message

College **strategy** for the next three years is currently being constructed. A focus on College finances, membership, workforce, sustainability and industry partnerships are the clear stand out priorities. Clearly, increased **engagement** with trainees, members and fellows to create that collaborative critical mass to get things done is vital – we must all realise that our professional wellbeing, existence and relevance depends on this – we are all part of this. **Collaboration** with other pathology groups, associations and other Colleges will also be necessary.

While healthcare is struggling in all sectors, pathology has a hugely important role in the future, especially around cancer pathways and outcomes. I attended an NHSE **Genomics** meeting this week and was left in doubt that many lives can be saved and extended if we can get **cancer** pathways directing therapy towards many of the new drugs using genomic markers to select the patients that will benefit – we just need to get the workflow optimised and of course ensure that other parts of the patient pathway are resuscitated to make it worthwhile. Huge optimism for the future of cancer treatment and the increasingly important role that pathology will play in this.

No doubt many of us will be uncovering our 2024/25 budgets to find significant gaps. For example, Scottish Health Boards, including pathology services, have been given a 0% uplift for the coming financial year; this against a pathology inflationary back drop of at least +10%. The prospect and threat of overspent budgets, vacancy freezes, innovation blocks and reductions in service provision loom large.

But all is not lost – funding opportunities are still around, so building cases around **LIMS, automation, sustainability, digital** and even **AI**, may pay dividend going forwards. Similarly, local business cases utilising pathology to deliver patient pathway improvements on an “invest to save” basis are worth pursuing.

The **workforce: workload** imbalance now strongly relies on the ‘**retain**’ and ‘**reform**’ pillars – the “train” pillar seems dead and buried for many years – training numbers, pathology posts and vacancies seem static, with cellular pathology training in particular facing the possibility of a significant reduction (-20%) this year due to difficulties in funding the NHSE Trust components of salaries. We need to develop robust workforce projections and shout loudly about the consequences of failure to train enough pathologists and scientists. This goes beyond shroud waving and is now about patient outcomes.

Driving appropriate testing is now more important than ever before. **Diagnostic Stewardship** is the new buzzword, and we have agreed a new collaborative approach to this via the Pathology Alliance, bringing together individuals from across the professions to develop the tools needed. Clinical buy-in of course is absolutely necessary, Pathology cannot deliver this in isolation, so I will be taking this to the Medical Royal College Academies of the UK in due course.

Look back at the words above in bold: **strategy, engagement, collaboration, genomics, cancer, LIMS, automation, sustainability, digital, AI, workforce: workload, retain, reform, and diagnostic stewardship** – these will all be important going ahead and form the basis of the tools we need to defend, extend, promote and signal what we do and why it is so important for the future of healthcare delivery going forwards.

Time for action...

Healthcare Science Scotland Awards

I was delighted and honoured to be awarded the 2024 Outstanding Contribution to Healthcare Science Award by the Chief Scientific Officer for the Scottish Government.

This award is very much shared with all the pathologists, healthcare scientists, bio-informatics and NHS Scotland staff that I have collaborated with over the years on many great projects. Such collaboration in the future will be key to future success in our disciplines. Also, huge congratulations to all the other award winners on the day, across the Scottish healthcare science professions.

High level principles concerning physician associates - Academy of Medical Royal Colleges consensus statement

We are a co-signatory of [this statement](#) which looks at regulation, scope of practice, training and supervision. The BMA have also issued [guidance setting out responsibilities for medical associate professionals \(MAPs\)](#). At College Council recently, we also invited the President of the Faculty of Physician Associates, Jamie Saunders, to present followed by open discussion.

New RCPATH Fellows Ceremony

I was delighted to be able to welcome 129 new Fellows to the College in February. This is a biannual event and provides an opportunity for myself and other Honorary officers to meet new Fellows, find out more about their member journey and celebrate passing their final FRCPath examinations. I also presented awards to the winners of the Trainee Research Medals, Science Communication prize and the Hugh Platt and Paola Domizio essay prizes. [Congratulate all new Fellows and award winners.](#)

Spring Budget

A £3.4 billion was pledged in the budget to fund an NHS productivity plan to find £35 billion in savings.

Measures outlined in the plan include NHS Trusts to have Electronic Patient Records by March 2026, opening new Community Diagnostic Centres and upgrading IT systems,

Parliamentary Engagement

There has been continued strong interest in our recently published [joint report](#) with the Royal College of Radiologists on the potential for AI in diagnostics, following a meeting we co-chaired at No10 Downing Street. The joint report sets out a shared plan of action for government, the NHS, and the Medical Royal

Colleges to facilitate better patient pathways, optimised diagnosis and speed up therapy.

We have had several invitations to meet to discuss the report including from Greg Clark MP, who is the Chair of the [Science, Innovation and Technology](#) select committee, and the Welsh and Scottish governments.

Artificial Intelligence and Technology

College Fellows Professor Darren Treanor and Professor Clare Verrill, members of the College's [Digital Pathology committee](#), spoke at the [Westminster Health Forum](#) conference, 'Next steps for cancer treatment, prevention and diagnosis in England', on priorities and solutions for reducing the cancer backlog.

College joins coalition in signing consensus statement on tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

The College joined calls for the development and adoption of rapid diagnostics to tackle AMR and support antimicrobial stewardship. The consensus statement, co-ordinated by BIVDA (the British In Vitro Diagnostics Association) was co-signed by College Vice President Dr Noha El Sakka OBE. The statement sets out a position underlining the need to enable the adoption of existing rapid diagnostic technology that can support antibiotic prescribing with a set of recommendations for government and NHS England and other relevant system partners. You can read the consensus statement on the [College website](#).

Nominate a pathology team for our RCPATH Achievement Awards

Every day thousands of College members work to the highest standards in pathology education, training and research to deliver the best patient care. The RCPATH Achievement Awards 2024 are your opportunity to nominate a pathology team and celebrate excellence in pathology practice. Nominations are open until 15 April. Visit [the website](#) for criteria and how to nominate.

Dr Bernie Croal
President, The Royal College of Pathologists
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A PDF version of this newsletter is available at
[RCPATH newsletters](#)

Working for members

[The Pathology Portal nominated for Health Service Journal Digital Award](#)

We are delighted to announce that the Pathology Portal has been shortlisted for Health Service Journal Digital Award. The aim of the awards is to recognise digital products, projects and services that transform healthcare delivery, enhance efficiency, and improve patient outcomes. With the HSJ Digital Awards attracting over 340 entries, this is a fantastic achievement. The winners will be announced on the 6 June.

The Pathology Portal

The Pathology Portal offers an extensive collection of over 5,000 resources which encompass diverse cases, informative videos, podcasts, quizzes, and more, catering to the professional development needs of pathologists at various stages of development.

The resources have been accessed over 120,000 times with recent additions including various EQA schemes, toxicology resources focusing on autopsy, and haematology materials. With a growing user base now exceeding 2,800 members, for those who have not yet joined the Pathology Portal, explore the platform and [discover the wealth of resources available](#).

We are also pleased to share that the Pathology Portal was highlighted in response to a [House of Commons question on digital pathology](#)

You can share feedback, questions, suggestions, or content with us at pathologyportal@rcpath.org

Expressions of Interest for international examination centres

We are pleased to announce that the College is now receiving Expressions of Interest for international examination centres to host the FRCPath Part 2 Examination in Histopathology.

Expressions of Interest are sought from suitably experienced institutions willing to partner with the College to establish a regional examination centre for the delivery of the FRCPath Part 2 examination.

Institutions wishing to partner with the College must complete and submit the Expression of Interest Form available [on our website](#). Applications from individuals without the support of an institution will not be considered. The deadline for Expressions of Interests is Monday 25 March. Forms must be emailed to international@rcpath.org

Essay Competitions for Undergraduates and Foundation Doctors

The College's two [annual essay prizes](#) offer undergraduates and Foundation doctors 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 the impact of climate change on health, disease, and pathology. Prize winners in both competitions will be awarded £250, will have their essay published on our website and in the College magazine, The Bulletin, and will be presented with a certificate at a Royal College of Pathologists event. The Paola Domizio Foundation Essay Prize closes on 8 April and the Hugh Platt Essay Prize closes on 8 May. If you are an undergraduate or Foundation doctor, please do take part this year. If you're not eligible to enter, please [share the webpage link](#) with any relevant contacts.

Your CPD services

The College aims to promote excellence and advance knowledge in pathology practice across all specialties. One objective to achieve this is to continue to develop excellent CPD recording and support services.

Although the CPD year officially ends in March, you have until 30 September to submit your CPD return. Please ensure that you submit your return by this date.

If you have any inquiries or need further assistance, please contact the Member Engagement and Support Team – Tel: 020 7451 6720 or by email at cpd@rcpath.org.

Get involved in the College

Volunteer Opportunities: National Quality Assurance Advisory Panel (NQAAP)

Are you interested in playing a key role in overseeing and monitoring the correct operation of External Quality Assessment schemes in the specialties of Medical Microbiology or Immunology?

The College is delighted to have just opened two leadership roles in the crucial work of External Quality Assurance, which plays a pivotal role in patient safety and improving patients' experience of healthcare.

The Chair of each NQAAP is fundamental in ensuring patient safety is placed at the forefront and assuring the reliability of laboratory medicine. Each NQAAP has been established to provide a forum in which good practise and challenges are discussed, escalated and solved in an effective and efficient manner. If you have any questions about the application process or the work of the NQAAPs, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Maria Marrero-Feo, Professional Guidelines Manager, on maria.marrero-feo@rcpath.org.

We welcome applications from all backgrounds regardless of their disability, ethnicity, heritage, gender, sexuality, religion, or socio-economic background. We look forward to hearing from you.

- [Medical Microbiology Chair Job Advert](#)
- [Immunology Chair Job Advert](#)

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

International

The Global Health Workforce Programme

We are proud to announce we have successfully secured a grant for new international project running until January 2025. We will deliver a range of activities in partnership with the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria, The Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Aga Khan University, Kenya and the Association for Laboratory Medicine, UK. The aim of activities are to improve the quality of chemical pathology training and service provision in Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria. The Department of Health and Social Care is funding the project and the wider Global Health Workforce partnerships are being directed by the Tropical Health Education Trust (THET). [Find out more.](#)

International Women's Day 2024 – 8 March

We were pleased to support of this year's International Women's Day theme - #InspireInclusion. Professor Marta Cohen, RCPATH Vice President for Learning, has created a news story on the pioneering women who have #InspiredInclusion in pathology. [Find out more.](#)

New content completes the Ghana lecture series 2

The Ghana lecture series 1 and 2 is a collection of 47 video lectures that include topics relating to chemical pathology, haematology, histopathology, microbiology and research. The project was a collaboration between the College and the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons funded by the Department of Health and Social Care and coordinated by The Tropical Health Education Trust (THET).

View the most recent titles on our [virtual resources page](#). Thank you to all Fellows and those within our networks for supporting this project.

- To evaluate the laboratory investigation of the deceased patient
- To evaluate laboratory investigation of the unconscious patient
- My approach to kidney biopsies
- Expanding research horizons: General research methodologies
- Statistics in medicine.

New publications

New consultations

- [Guidelines on autopsy practice: Fetal autopsy after termination of pregnancy or fetal loss associated with congenital anomaly](#) (closes 27 March)
- [Guidelines on autopsy practice: Fetal autopsy of 2nd trimester fetal loss \(excluding termination of pregnancy for congenital anomaly\)](#) (closes 27 March)
- [Guidelines on autopsy practice: Fetal autopsy following antepartum or intrapartum death of non-malformed fetuses](#) (closes 27 March)

New publications

[Reporting cellular pathology samples at home](#)

New blogs

- [Reaching your potential: the benefits of mentoring schemes](#)
- [Service spotlight blog – CareFertility](#)

College Courses

[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 and 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~~[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~~[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 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.

Other external events of interest

21 March 2024

[11th Annual Oxford Bone Infection Conference](#)

21 – 22 March 2024

[British Association for Ophthalmic Pathology Annual Meeting](#)

22 March 2024

[An introduction to guideline development](#)

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](#)