



The Royal College of Pathologists  
Pathology: the science behind the cure

# **RCPATH Northern Ireland Symposium 2024**

**Thursday 19 September 2024**

Held in-person only at:  
The Postgraduate Medical Centre, Belfast City Hospital, 51 Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 7AB



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#RCPATHNorthernIreland



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## General Information

Thank you for registering to attend the in-person RCPATH Northern Ireland Symposium 2024, which will be held at the Postgraduate Medical Centre, Belfast City Hospital, 51 Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 7AB on Thursday 19 September 2024 at 9.30am.

We look forward to welcoming you at the symposium!

### **Certificates of attendance**

Certificates of attendance will be emailed to all attendees, within a fortnight of the conference. This conference is eligible for 3 CPD credits.

### **Speaker presentations**

Where permission has been given, speaker presentations will be available after the conference.

### **Feedback**

A link to an online feedback form will be emailed to you after the conference, please do complete. All comments are confidential and will be taken into consideration in the development future conferences.



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# RCPATH Northern Ireland Symposium 2024

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Postgraduate Lecture Theatre, Belfast City Hospital

- Meeting opens**  
09:30 Dr Gareth McKeeman, *Chair, RCPATH Northern Ireland Regional Council*  
Professor Sir Michael McBride, *Chief Medical Officer*
- Mycobacterium bovis: an overview**  
09:40 Dr Louise McCorry, *Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*
- Update on management of dyslipidaemia**  
10:05 Dr Peter Sharpe, *Southern Health and Social Care Trust*
- NI Pathology Blueprint Programme Update**  
10:35 Dr Michael McKenna, *Northern Ireland Pathology Network Clinical Director for Blueprint*
- Pathology Network and Workforce Review Update**  
10:45 Mr Ronan Strain, *Northern Ireland Pathology Network Manager*
- College President update**  
10:55 Dr Bernie Croal, *President of the Royal College of Pathologists*
- Coffee Break**  
11:15
- Encompass update**  
11:35 Dr Shane McKee, *Deputy Chief Clinical Information Officer, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*
- Histopathology case report- a curious conundrum**  
11:50 Dr Niall O'Neill, *Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*
- Cancer Strategy**  
12:10 Dr Mark Catherwood, *Regional Molecular Diagnostics Service (Germline)*
- Q&A session**  
12:45
- Meeting closes**  
13:00 Dr Gareth McKeeman, *Chair, RCPATH Northern Ireland Regional Council*
- Lunch**  
13:00-  
14:00 (to be held in the Lobby area of the Postgraduate Centre)
- Trainee Forum with the President**  
14:00-  
15:30 (to be held at the Larkin Room, Postgraduate Centre)



# Presenters

## **Dr Gareth McKeeman**

Dr Gareth McKeeman graduated with a BSc (Hon) in Biomedical Science in 1999 before going on to complete a PhD in 2003 (both at Queen's University Belfast). He then worked as a Research Fellow (School of Medicine, QUB) for 4 years before moving to the NHS in 2007 to start the Clinical Scientist Training Programme. During this he completed an MSc (Clinical Biochemistry with Molecular Biology, University of Surrey), and then FRCPath (Clinical Biochemistry) during Senior and Principal Clinical Scientist posts.

He took up his current post as Consultant Clinical Scientist (Dept. Clinical Biochemistry, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust) in 2015, where he has oversight over the Clinical Biochemistry General Automation Labs across 3 hospital sites and is Chair of the Trust POCT committee. He is also currently Chair of the Northern Ireland Regional Council.

## **Professor Sir Michael McBride**

Prof Sir Michael McBride was appointed to the post of Chief Medical Officer for the Department of Health, in September 2006.

Prior to joining the department, he had been Medical Director at the Royal Group of Hospitals from August 2002.

Prof Sir Michael McBride graduated with Distinction from Queen's University Belfast in 1986 and completed his undergraduate and postgraduate training in Northern Ireland. In 1991 he attained a Research Fellowship at St Mary's Medical School and Imperial College London, where he carried out research into new drug treatments for HIV.

Prof Sir Michael McBride has been a Consultant in the Health Service since 1994 when he was appointed Consultant Physician in HIV medicine at the Royal Group of Hospitals and has more than 10 years health service management experience.

## **Dr Louise McCorry**

Consultant in Infectious Diseases and Medical virology.

Dr McCorry completed her undergraduate degree at University of Dundee, moving to Northern Ireland in 2009 to complete Foundation and Core Medical training. She was the first trainee in Northern Ireland to be appointed to a joint National Training Number in Combined Infection training taking up a post in Infectious Diseases and Medical Virology. She completed her certificate of Training in 2021 having achieved both Membership of the Royal College of Physicians, Fellowship of Royal College of Pathology and a Diploma in Tropical Health and Hygiene. She was the first Infectious Diseases and Medical Virology consultant on the Island of Ireland. At present, she works for the Belfast Health and Social care Trust in a joint position, and has a lead role in High Consequence Infectious Diseases, OPAT and GU services. She is the Training Programme Director for Higher specialist training in Infectious Diseases.

Areas of interest include zoonotic infections as well as High consequence infectious Diseases.

## **Dr Peter Sharpe**

Dr Peter Sharpe has been a Consultant Chemical Pathologist in the Southern Health & Social Care Trust (SHSCT) since 1998. Previous to this he was Consultant Chemical Pathologist in Royal Liverpool University Hospital and trained in Belfast. He completed an MD in 1997 on the effects of





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high glucose on vascular smooth muscle cells. He has also been Associate Medical Director for R&D since 2008 for the SHSCT. His clinical interests are lipids, cardiovascular risk reduction, diabetes mellitus and nutrition.

**Dr Michael McKenna**  
**Northern Ireland Pathology Network Clinical Director for Blueprint**

Dr Michael McKenna is a Consultant Cellular Pathologist from Northern Ireland with over 20 years of experience in clinical work and healthcare management.

He is the Clinical Director for the NI Pathology Blueprint Programme - a pathology transformation initiative to move the management of all public sector laboratories, including the NI Blood Transfusion Service, into a single regional pathology management structure.

He is currently Chair of the Northern Ireland Pathology Network Cellular Pathology group. He undertook a pilot study to introduce digital pathology into Northern Ireland, which subsequently led to the first country or region in the UK to adopt a single imaging system that combines radiology images, pathology images and reports.

**Mr Ronan Strain**

Ronan is the manager of the Northern Ireland Pathology Network. He has been working in Health & Social Care NI since 2009 following entry as a graduate. Ronan has worked across the whole system, including the Provider (Trusts), Commissioner (SPPG) & Regulatory (RQIA).

He has a real passion for quality improvement and transformation, and strive to deliver a world class health service for the population.

Outside of work, Ronan loves spending time with his family, travelling and playing / coaching GAA, football & golf.

**Dr Bernie Croal**  
**President, The Royal College of Pathologists**

Dr Bernie Croal is an NHS chemical pathologist from Aberdeen specialising in intravenous nutritional support. He also oversees laboratory services at the Cleveland Clinic in London via TDL. He is a science and medicine graduate, and has trained in general medicine, chemical pathology and Health Services/Public Health Research. He has spent a long career in various leadership roles within NHS Scotland including clinical director and regional lead for pathology, NHS Scotland demand optimisation lead and chair of the Scottish Clinical Biochemistry Network (SCBN).

He was the President of the Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine (ACB-UK). He is a fellow of both the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and the Institute of Biomedical Science.

Within RCPATH he has chaired many committees, been Scotland Regional Council Chair for 9 years and a Trustee for 13 years. He also served as College Vice President from 2011 to 2014.

**Dr Shane McKee**

Dr Shane McKee is a Consultant in Genetic and Genomic Medicine at the Northern Ireland Regional Genetics Service based in Belfast City Hospital. He leads the Northern Ireland contributions to the UK 100,000 Genomes Project and the Deciphering Developmental Disorders (DDD) Study. He is also Deputy Chief Clinical Information Officer for Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and Deputy Medical Lead for the Belfast Trust implementation of the Epic electronic health record system. His current work focuses on bringing health records and genomic sequencing together to improve the diagnosis and management of rare disorders.



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### Dr Niall O'Neill

Dr Niall O'Neill is an ST5 Registrar in Histopathology at the Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast, Northern Ireland.

### Dr Mark Catherwood

Dr Mark Catherwood is a Consultant Clinical Scientist at Belfast City Hospital and is Head of Cancer Molecular Diagnostics, Regional Molecular Diagnostics Service, BHSC and honorary lecturer at Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University.

Mark is a member of ERIC (European Research Initiative on CLL) TP53 network that was established for the standardisation of TP53 analysis and a member of IgCLL (Immunoglobulin CLL) that has standardised IGHV mutational status in CLL. Mark is also a core member of EuroClonality which is a European consortium for the development of molecular diagnostic approaches to support the diagnosis and follow-up of haematological malignancies, particularly lymphoid malignancies.

Mark's research interests are mainly on translational cancer research, particularly in the implementation of Next Generation Sequencing for molecular diagnostics.

Mark has published more than 80 peer-reviewed papers in journals with high impact in molecular haematology and pathology.

## Abstracts

### **Mycobacterium bovis: an overview**

Dr Louise McCorry, *Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*

Since 2018 Northern Ireland has seen an increase in a rare zoonotic infection in humans called *Mycobacterium bovis*. This infection was previously closely associated with patients known to have links with agriculture. Although numbers remain, small we want to describe a change in the population and risk we have seen with *M bovis* over the past 5 years. Our aim is to inform clinicians who may not be seeking diagnostics for such an infection in this previously under described population.

### **Update on management of dyslipidaemia**

Dr Peter Sharpe, *Southern Health and Social Care Trust*

Learning points:

1. To understand the evidence base on managing dyslipidaemia, how to estimate cardiovascular risk and know the lipid targets for both primary and secondary prevention.
2. To understand how cholesterol lowering medications work and gain an appreciation of new lipid lowering medications (PCSK9 inhibitors, inclisiran, bempedoic acid and icosapent ethyl)
3. To appreciate that Familial Hypercholesterolaemia is the most common autosomal dominantly inherited condition in our society, to understand its aetiology and clinical implications, its diagnosis and treatment.

The evidence base to lower cholesterol for both primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease is overwhelming. The majority of studies relate to statins but more recently the arrival of new classes of medications also now with evidence-base such as PCSK9i, inclisiran (si RNA), bempedoic





acid and icosapent ethyl have opened up combination therapies (to achieve lower LDL-C targets) and alternatives for statin-intolerant patients. The lower the LDL-C the better and there appears to be no threshold beyond which benefit ceases. Fibrates are very effective at lowering triglycerides but have no cardiovascular benefit. Lipoprotein (a) is recognised as a genetically inherited independent risk factor for CV disease and new therapies to lower it are in phase 3 clinical trials with outcome date expected in 2025. The role of triglycerides and triglyceride rich lipoproteins in CV disease is well recognised but needs more targeted treatment – again new therapies are in development and in clinical trials. Familial Hypercholesterolaemia (FH) is a common (1:270) autosomal dominantly inherited condition of high LDL-C from birth and a much increased risk of premature CV disease. Treatment with statins and other LDL-C lowering agents has been revolutionary in reducing risk. A cascade family screening service is well established in N Ireland to identify affected family members and initiate early treatment (from age 8-10 years onwards if appropriate), this has been extremely successful and is the envy of other UK nations.

### **NI Pathology Blueprint Programme Update**

Dr Michael McKenna, *Northern Ireland Pathology Network Clinical Director for Blueprint*

### **Pathology Network and Workforce Review Update**

Mr Ronan Strain, *Northern Ireland Pathology Network Manager*

### **Encompass update**

Dr Shane McKee, *Deputy Chief Clinical Information Officer, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*

Northern Ireland is half-way through its Trust-by-Trust go-live of the encompass project, which will replace many outdated and legacy software systems and paper with a single instance of the Epic Electronic Health Record (EHR) across Northern Ireland. This is one of the most significant changes to how we provide secondary and community care in NI, and one of the first cases globally where an entire country-scale health system has been moved to a single EHR instance. This brings both opportunities and challenges, and the journey still has some way to go. However, with two Trusts live, this has allowed us to take a new look at many of our pre-existing challenges, including the services we provide for patients with very rare conditions that don't fit into neatly defined boxes.

### **Histopathology case report- a curious conundrum**

Dr Niall O'Neill, *Belfast Health and Social Care Trust*

### **Cancer Strategy**

Dr Mark Catherwood, *Regional Molecular Diagnostics Service (Germline)*











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