



The Royal College of Pathologists

Pathology: the science behind the cure

REPORT OF TRENT REGIONAL COUNCIL 2006-7

A Sense of Major Change on the Horizon

This year has been characterised by sense of expectancy as rationalisations and the future of networks go on hold pending the outcome of the Carter Review pilot sites.

- Trent contains two contrasting pilot sites – Derby and PathLinks.
- We have had regular reports from the pilot sites on the initial data collection and costing exercise.
- We are very aware that pathology costs do apparently vary by a high factor. Trent is a large region with good motorway links and we are conscious of the potential mobility of pathology tests.
- Some Trusts are in active discussion between themselves over rationalisation of pathology services and any major centralised laboratory, particularly involving the private sector, might compete vigorously for primary health care's samples.
- We want professionals to be in the driving seat of any major rationalisation so that quality and patient safety will be maintained and the Regional Council's discussions repeatedly focused on the potential loss of control if there is major reorganisation.

Rogue Foundation Trusts

We have had another challenging year with Foundation Trusts doing their own thing, with under funding of study leave, failure to establish promised Consultant posts and erosion of supporting activities in the new Consultant Contract and of access to professional leave for benefit of the wider NHS. We have made representations focused upon quality, accreditation and job description review aiming to protect pathology's interests.

National Guidelines

The gap between RCPATH national guidelines for quality of autopsies and the practice which Coroners will actually authorise and commission is primarily a concern for histopathologists, but the same theme does apply to other specialties where pathologists strive to achieve national standards yet the commissioning of levels of investigation falls short of these. We have sought throughout the year to assist pathologists in dealing with the practicalities of this, and have made national representations over the appropriate balance between idealism and realism in recommended practices.

Regional Scientific Meeting: Changes in Training, Changes in Practice

Professors Goura Kudesia and Carrock Sewell organised an excellent meeting which was well attended and appreciated by the attendees. Success of the meeting appears to be due to striking a balance between the specialised professional content and an update on the management of training, which had multidisciplinary interest.

Looking Forward

Trent Regional Council is thriving, with good attendance, wide representation, and lively practical debates. We look forward to assisting in pathology's brave new world and to our forthcoming Regional Scientific Meeting: "Causes and cures for the Lymphoid Malignancies" organised by Professor Martin Dyer, 12 October 2007.

Tim Stephenson
Chairman
RCPATH Trent Regional Council