



Professor Mike Osborn

From the President

Hello and Happy New Year to you all. I hope everyone had a wonderful festive season. As we move into 2023, it is a good time to reflect on some of the work the College has been doing over the last year and especially what has been going on since the last *Bulletin* in October.

Engaging our members

When I became President, I highlighted the importance of returning the College to its core functions, including a focus on the College serving you, our members. Since the autumn of 2022, unfortunately somewhat delayed from the time I started as President due to COVID, I have led a 'Your College, Your Profession' membership engagement tour around the United Kingdom. The seven events held so far all over the UK have been very successful and extremely popular.

As part of these engagement events or indeed as part of any other event taking place around the country, where the chance arises, I take the opportunity to undertake a tour of the host organisations' pathology laboratories. These lab tours are extremely informative and helpful as they allow all grades of laboratory staff to be aware of the activities of the College and to see that the College has come to visit them. In addition, they allow me as President to see first-hand the good and the less good aspects of service delivery at the coalface and to obtain an insight into the practical, financial and political issues affecting services, all helping me to better advocate for the needs of pathology and for you, our members.

Lessons for the College

I believe these engagement events are vitally important for the College, facilitating as they do a very useful two-way exchange of thoughts and ideas between you as members and me as President representing the College. The feedback from these events has been very positive, with attendees saying they were very much left with the knowledge that they were important to the College and that the College was listening. This is even more important for those from more remote and rural locations and those outside of the NHSE/London bubble.

These events have increased the visibility of the College nationally and have given me the opportunity to personally meet you, hear what you want and need from the College and better understand how we can further support your work. We understand what you think the College should do to further the development of the profession across all our specialties and throughout the United Kingdom and indeed the world.

During these events, you have told me that you value your College membership and the work the

College does on your behalf, but also that there is more we could do to effectively support your work and represent our profession. You've raised issues such as the increased complexity of cases and the problems around recruitment and retention of colleagues, often the result of the retirement of experienced and highly skilled consultants. On many occasions, this is exacerbated by the well-documented problems within the NHS, particularly around the pension system and flexibility around retire and return policies in many organisations.

As we all know, staffing and resource allocation in all our specialties is a very complex issue, particularly given the increased workload we are facing and the greater complexity of cases we are dealing with. To help address your concerns in these fundamental areas of our working lives, the College has committed additional resources and focus to our workforce planning and intelligence work to help support our data collection and understanding in these areas. Using the improved information that this work will provide, we will be much more able to advocate for the long-term needs of the profession and individual services and to help you get the right resources you need to support service delivery and improve patient care.

Upcoming tour dates

My engagement tour continues with three further live events being held in early 2023 in Swansea, Manchester and Bodelwyddan (North Wales). However, I appreciate that many members are or have been unable to attend these sessions. We are keen to hear from all our members if you have a suggestion, an issue to raise or something to contribute. To ensure everyone can be involved in these important discussions, the live events will be supported by several online meetings starting in Spring 2023. In the meantime, if you have any thoughts or suggestions on how the College can better support you, or if you wish to contribute in any way to the discussion, please email us at the dedicated email mycollege@rcpath.org.

I am confident that these efforts at increasing member engagement have not gone unnoticed by our members, wherever you may be based and whether you have been able to attend the events or contribute via the email or online sessions. By publicising these events on our website and in the *Bulletin*, I hope members will be reassured that the College is listening and is there to support you and your needs.

College events across the country

Path to Success

In addition to the engagement tour, there have been many other events going on around the country

since October. In November, Ali Robb organised the fantastic 'Path to Success' event in Newcastle to encourage doctors in foundation and core training and medical students to take up a career in pathology. Ali was superbly supported by Matt Clarke and a host of trainees and pathologists from a whole range of specialties. I was lucky enough to attend and speak at this very popular event and was able to see a 'pathology battle' and DNA being extracted from strawberries. There were talks and discussions helping to improve people's understanding and perception of pathology as a career, explaining the training process and demystifying the application system. With Matt Clarke, I judged the excellent posters entered by the attendees and had a very informative and enjoyable day speaking to young doctors keen to be our colleagues of the future. Thank you to Ali and to everyone involved for a great event.

What has pathology ever done for us?

A little further north in late November, [we held the RCPATH Scotland 60th Anniversary Symposium](#), entitled 'What has pathology ever done for us?' The venue for this free symposium was the impressive Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. The series of talks over the day highlighted how laboratory services are vital to healthcare and how they provide the foundation for all medical and surgical disciplines. Specific topics included the importance and relevance of pathology to research, development and innovation; the development and cutting-edge use of cardiac markers; and advances in artificial intelligence.

Around 170 delegates attended the symposium: College Fellows, members, trainees, medical students and other stakeholders including those from Government, politicians, board chief executives, medical directors and the media. The quality of the speakers was fantastic and included Professor Sir Gregor Smith, Chief Medical Officer (CMO), who gave the RCPATH Cameron Memorial Lecture on the healthcare landscape in Scotland focusing on pathology, and Professor Nick Mills who gave the Flynn Lecture on cardiac biomarkers and the transformation of acute cardiac care. Other talks were given by Catherine Ross, Scottish Chief Healthcare Science Officer and Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak, Chief Scientist (Health) for the Scottish Government.

There were many highlights, but I think CMO Gregor Smith's talk was the main highlight. He had clearly taken the time to research the College and also to meet with Bernie Croal (Chair RCPATH Scotland) for an hour the week before the symposium to ensure he was on message. Professor Smith's deliverance of a very sincere thank you to the profession for their input during the pandemic came across as being very thoughtful, relevant and genuine.

Overall, while there was much reflection on the challenges facing healthcare, there was still an air of

concentrated engagement and even optimism that pathology should be primed to take advantage of the opportunities that can make a significant difference to the delivery of healthcare by optimising patient pathways and outcomes. In addition, this was of course our first major face to face College meeting for over three years and much was made of the opportunity to meet with colleagues over breaks and lunch to discuss other important issues. This type of networking and opportunity to discuss issues face-to-face is, I am sure many will agree, extremely useful and is something the College will try to encourage going forwards. A huge thank you to everyone involved but particularly to Bernie Croal for organising and hosting such a great event.

Advocacy work

College response to the Autumn Statement

The College continues to be extremely active in advocating for proper support, resources and funding for healthcare. We responded to the Government's Autumn Statement, which was announced by the Chancellor in November. Our comments highlighted that the pressures on an understaffed workforce pre-pandemic were severe and that the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the situation. We strongly welcomed the announcement of an independent workforce plan for the number of doctors, nurses and other professionals that will be needed in five, ten and 15 years' time.

Recognition that a properly staffed workforce is the only way to deliver the best patient care is long overdue and we were one of the many health and care organisations that called for this plan. We are pleased that our calls have been heard. It is essential that the workforce plan, when it is published this year, comes with a clear commitment to provide the funding necessary to make this happen. We were pleased to see the additional NHS funding outlined in the statement that will support the NHS to deliver its key priorities, but we are concerned at the significant tightening of public spending from 2025 to 2028.

Meeting with MPs and healthcare leaders

Since the last Bulletin, I have been at further meetings with Amanda Pritchard, CEO of NHSE, and have had meetings with MPs and policymakers including Matt Warman MP. I have also been interviewed by Sky TV News and BBC Radio News about workforce issues and diagnostic backlogs. In addition, in the next few weeks I have meetings and lab tours with several MPs, including Elliot Colburn MP and Imran Hussain MP.

At the time of writing, nurses, paramedics, ambulance technicians, call handlers and other staff are undertaking industrial action. The NHS is facing unprecedented pressures and those taking part in strike action clearly have longstanding and deep concerns over their workforce. These concerns are shared by all those working in medicine

and health. We need a clear, long-term plan for addressing the chronic workforce shortages in the NHS. Without action to recruit and retain the right numbers of staff, we will not be able to diagnose and treat patients quickly, tackle the backlog or try to manage winter pressures. Rest assured that at the meetings and events which I attend for the College with politicians and policymakers, I take every opportunity to raise the issues affecting you, our members, and pathology as a whole, at the highest level.

Concluding our Diamond Jubilee

As you know last year, 2022, was the College's Diamond Jubilee year. Sixty years ago, in 1962, the College was formed. Sarah Coupland (Vice President, Communications) did a fantastic job in overseeing and organising the celebrations, which were tremendous and covered the whole country. In addition, she obtained significant sponsorship for the Jubilee, which was celebrated comprehensively but at minimal cost to the College. A big thank you to Sarah and her team for all their very hard work.

Charity bike ride

One of the highlights of the Jubilee year occurred in September when a group of 25 cyclists, led by Sarah Coupland, undertook a [sponsored bike ride from Land's End to John O'Groats](#) (LEJOG) in just over 11 days. This tour was a bespoke one organised by Cycle Retreats and the money raised was for Cancer Research UK (CRUK), a charity which the College has very close ties to, as they have worked with us on projects around workforce and adequate resourcing for pathology, as well as supporting significant pathology research.

With the help of CRUK representative Chris Doyle, the cyclists were able to increase public awareness about the role of pathologists and pathology in cancer diagnostics and care along the entire route. On 16 November, Sarah Coupland and I met Michelle Mitchell OBE, the Chief Executive of CRUK, to hand over the money raised by the ride in the form of a [cheque valued at £35,741](#) (without Gift Aid).

Michelle Mitchell was extremely grateful for the efforts that were undertaken by the cyclists and the College. She emphasised the integral role that pathologists play in cancer services and was very aware of the workforce problems within NHS pathology labs across the UK. She highlighted CRUK's keen interest to continue to work together with the College to impress upon healthcare policymakers the absolute need to invest more money in NHS labs to make them more sustainable and to allow them to better adopt advancing technologies (e.g. genomics and digital pathology) in a seamless manner. Although another College bespoke LEJOG will not take place next year, the College plans to collaborate with CRUK in several ways, including in other similar sport-themed events.

Thank you to the College members and staff

I have only been able to touch on a few activities that the College has been involved in over the past few months. In addition to these, there is a huge amount of work and activity going on involving all four College directorates – from Communications to Learning, Corporate Services and Professional Practice. None of this would be possible without the hard work of all our members involved in College activities, helped and supported by our fantastic College staff, so I would like to say thank you to you all. Without all of you, the College could not exist.

I hope this editorial has shown how much the College values and the importance the College places on its interaction with its members, be that at engagement events, lab tours or other events such as symposia. As well as allowing the College to engage and to hear from its members about what you want and need from your College, I hope also that the increased engagement these events facilitate allows members a clearer realisation of the important work the College does to promote you as pathologists and pathology as a whole. I hope it opens the door for all members to consider stepping into various College roles for the benefit of the profession and their own professional lives.

Finally, as we enter 2023, the New Year's Honours List, the first from King Charles III, has been published. Once again, pathologists and members of the College have performed extremely well, with our members' fantastic work being recognised. Professor Lyn Susan Chitty, Professor of Genetics and Fetal Medicine at Great Ormond Street Hospital, was made Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for services to medicine. Professor David Charles Mangham, Professor of Musculoskeletal Pathology, University of Manchester and Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire for services to forensic science. Professor Michael Conway, Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, was honoured for services to anatomical pathology technology. Professor Nigel Cunliffe, Professor of Medical Microbiology, University of Liverpool and Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust, was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for services to infectious disease and vaccine research. Professor Mayur Lakhani, RCPATH Medical Examiner and former Chair and President of the Royal College of General Practitioners, has been knighted for services to general practice. Huge congratulations to them and to everyone who received a New Year's Honour.

Professor Mike Osborn
President