

Industry Leaders' Forum 2026

Event report

Introduction

Following an inaugural Industry Leaders' Forum in 2024, this event explored potential areas of collaboration and alignment between industry and the profession.

On Monday 27 April 2026, the College welcomed 100 stakeholders from across diagnostics and pharmaceutical industries, government, trade associations and our membership for a one-day event that aimed to support delivery of our corporate engagement strategy. The event programme combined speaker-led talks, audience Q&A, and breakout group discussions and offered a unique opportunity for representatives from the corporate sector to share insights and exchange knowledge with RCPath Fellows, other professional bodies and government. The event programme and speaker biographies can be found online [here](#).

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Section 1: Key points from breakout discussion sessions

Group 1: What are we trying to achieve with IT interoperability?

Dr Muhammad Aslam, Consultant Histopathologist and Clinical Director for North Wales Diagnostic and Specialist Clinical Services

What are we trying to achieve?

- Faster, safer diagnosis for patients
- IT interoperability that will support the delivery of the 10-Year Health Plan for England
- Clinical usability
- Complete patient picture – end to end pathway
- Reducing duplication
- Enable AI & research

Challenges

- There is a huge amount of patient data in pathology, but it isn't well-connected or accessible
- Legacy systems mean that there needs to be effective data cleansing and data compatibility
- There are often different needs across the different pathology specialties and no agreement about the minimal requirements
- Systems are often too complex to work with each other
- Compatibility with other systems e.g., microbiologists on wards, can struggle to access GP patient records

Opportunities

Improve collaboration between pathology and industry – eg agreed templates, standardisation across systems

- Using the role of Chief Clinical Information Officer at trust level
- Learn from UK initiatives e.g., the introduction of the All-Wales LIMS



- Could guidance be developed around UK Healthcare data compliance to simplify access for patient care?

Pathology should not wait for interoperability — we should be shaping it.

Group 2: Digital pathology and AI – identifying priority areas that achieve most gains for patients

Professor Louise Jones, Professor of breast pathology, Queen Mary University of London and Genomics England and Professor Clare Verrill, Professor in Cellular Pathology and AI with Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences, University of Oxford, and Consultant in Cellular Pathology (Uro pathology) at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

- Run a focused workshop on breaking down barriers to AI adoption
- Priority areas to look at – standardisation, interoperability, digital passports
- AI implementation across all pathology specialties
- Provide an ‘AI playground’ forum where pathologists can ‘try before they buy’
- Produce guidance
- Get basics with IT right first to enable widespread AI and digital adoption – look at where we can work together to push for/ fund a national fit-for-purpose IT infrastructure for our health system.

Group 3: Genomic cancer testing – advancing the service in partnership

Dr Guy Hannah, Consultant haematologist and haemato-pathologist, King’s College Hospital, and Dr David Moore, Consultant Thoracic and Molecular Pathologist, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Barriers to implementing genomic tests

- Quicker onto Novel Genomic Test Directory (NTD) (limited visibility of what is coming onto NTD)
- Standardisation
- Optimisation of testing during clinical trials



- Variation in technology
- Training, workforce, cost for novel tests / tech
- Lack of networking / inclusivity
- Lack of patient centred approach
- Ensuring appropriate EQA in time, accreditation cost

Ideas for improving collaboration in the drug development pathway

- Initiatives in place to improve earlier communication (e.g., Vaccines Launchpad)
- Consistency and the need for funding decisions across different regions
- RCPATH could provide recommendations on 'optimal timeline' for companion diagnostics approval

How increased genomic testing costs should be factored in when new treatments are available

- In clinical trials – industry view is that there is a lack of 'translational' labs able to work up tests within the Genomic Laboratory Hubs (GLH) structure (vs European model)
- 'Broad testing' may address some issues but current turnaround times not always appropriate
- Routine testing – timely NTD addition / pipeline will address this
- Funding decisions to include testing specifically

Group 4: How can industry and the College work together to support academic pathology/ translational research?

Professor Keith Hunter, Chair of RCPATH Research Committee, and Professor Roland Fleck, Director of Centre for Ultrastructural Imaging, Kings College London

- Highlight academic career pathways
- Can College provide standards/ advice e.g., on biobanking, where intellectual property lies (what is fair?) and importance of research



- Advice on Non-Disclosure Agreements and Value Added Tax!
- Use next/ first conference for showcasing good work
- Foster a culture of ‘critical enquiry’
- Tweak research committee terms of reference
- Make corporate partnerships more tangible – e.g. re. cancer plan.

Group 5: RCPATH conference – involving industry in inaugural RCPATH congress/ conference

Richard Smith, Head of Professional Practice, RCPATH, and Conor Meany, Director of Business Development and Colm O’Grady, Commercial Director, Conference Partners International

A successful future RCPATH conference should be:

- Distinctive and high value
- Outcome-driven (not just educational)
- Focused on leadership and decision-making audiences
- Collaborative across sectors
- Scientifically robust with real-world impact
- Flexible and hybrid in delivery

Group 6: Sharing experience and looking at ways to improve productivity in Histopathology

Dr Andrew Clarke, Consultant Histopathologist, Airedale Hospital and Director of PathoLogic Ltd

- Appetite for all stakeholders to get involved in improving productivity. College could use this forum to do that.
- Bring trade bodies in. Need representative group.
- Identify real vision for service – what trying to achieve and why?
- How to get to scale quickly?
- Need industry working together to solve problems.



Section 2: Next steps for the College

Our approach to advancing pathology in partnership with industry is to develop joint initiatives collaboratively with our corporate partners. While we offer a range of ‘standard’ corporate packages including our Corporate Membership scheme and webinar sponsorship opportunities, we are increasingly developing bespoke partnership initiatives with industry. These include roundtable meetings, co-badged publications, and stakeholder engagement exercises, which are starting to have a real impact in advocating for pathology at the highest level – our recent white paper, [‘Making every test count’](#), published in partnership with Roche Diagnostics, is a good example of this, as it has led to meetings with MPs, NHS England, and to further engagement and profile raising opportunities across a range of pathology-related themes.

The topics chosen for the breakout groups and speaker-led sessions at the 2026 Industry Leaders’ Forum reflect the issues in pathology that the College is committed to addressing in collaboration with our stakeholders. We therefore welcome any proposals from industry around development of joint initiatives related to one or more of these themes.

In addition, we are already developing College initiatives that support/ align with some of the suggestions and key points put forward by delegates at the 2026 Industry Leaders’ Forum. These include the following:

1. The College is continuing to build on our links with government and policy makers to drive pathology and diagnostics up the political agenda. We have recently hosted NHS England’s event on histopathology transformation and have upcoming meetings with Dr Rhydian Phillips and team, and speaker slots at future Westminster Health Forum meetings. Our [policy and public affairs work](#) includes ongoing engagement with parliamentarians and other key stakeholders on cancer diagnostics, workforce shortages, genomic medicine, [AI](#), antimicrobial resistance, and point of care testing (plus many other topics). We will continue to put forward the views of our Fellows and stakeholders to UK governments and will share



opportunities for our industry partners to input to our advocacy work on key issues affecting pathology services.

2. The College is developing the professions' position on the configuration of service, workforce and skills needed to deliver genomic testing services for cancer patients in the UK. This will include a consultation engagement exercise to ensure that views across all professions engaged in genomic cancer testing are considered. We are in the process of confirming our approach for this exercise.
3. We are planning an event on adoption of AI in histopathology in February 2027. The programme will include an international keynote speaker, deployment case studies, an expert panel Q&A, poster competition and demonstrations from sponsoring companies. Sponsorship packages have been sent out to a range of corporate contacts of the RCPATH at the time of writing. As outlined at the breakout group held at the Industry Leaders' Forum event, the RCPATH is developing plans for its first ever international conference/ congress event, to be held outside of London – the date for this event is tbc and a current target timeline includes delivery of the inaugural event in late 2028. Sponsorship opportunities will be available, and further information will be shared in due course. The corporate engagement team will be attending and are looking to run one or more sessions that support knowledge exchange and joined-up solutions and would welcome suggestions from our industry partners around this.
4. We are soon to launch some sponsorship opportunities for our [Fellowship Research Start-up Grants](#). The grants support early career researchers with funding to deliver proof-of-concept projects and offer the chance to align industry aims around social value and novel research with the RCPATH's objective to advance academic pathology in the UK. Further details will be shared with industry contacts very soon.
5. The College is developing its corporate engagement strategy, with potential expansion of the portfolio and programme of activities if resources allow. Suggestions from those working in both industry and pathology on how this should look are welcomed.



In addition, the corporate and public engagement team are sharing the key points from the 2026 Industry Leaders' Forum and sharing them with relevant internal groups including our [Specialty Advisory and other Committees](#), for their input and feedback on how suggestions might be taken forward.

Section 3: Summary of delegate feedback

Delegates were invited to complete a short online feedback form. 23 people completed this form, which provides a useful snapshot, and the responses are summarised below.

Most respondents rated their experience of attending the event at 4 or 5 out of 5. The mean score across the 23 respondents was 4.3. When asked how useful they found the event, 15 of the 23 respondents selected 'extremely useful', with 5 saying they found it 'somewhat useful'. One respondent said they found the event 'slightly useful' and one said, 'not at all useful'.

When asked to provide a reason for their answer to this question, positive responses included 'Gained a great understanding of the alignment of industry and RCPATH and some clear actions for me to influence', and 'Very helpful meeting, excellent networking opportunity'. More critical comments included 'It seemed like a talking shop' and 'I felt something tangible was missing'. All responses to this question are in appendix 1.

Feedback on speakers' presentations

In the responses received on the speaker presentation that attendees found most interesting, Dr Andrew Clark's talk on productivity was the most chosen presentation, closely followed by Dr Rhydian Phillip's keynote address, 'Transforming Pathology: Delivering for Patients, Enabling the NHS'. Positive comments on the event speaker-led sessions included, 'Very engaging discussion with and excellent audience and presenters', and 'It was very helpful to hear the views from the NHS, the industry and the pathologists. The points of coincidence and the gaps.'



Feedback on breakout group discussion sessions

Most respondents (22/23) said they found the breakout group discussion sessions 'extremely useful', 'somewhat useful' or 'slightly useful'. One respondent said 'neutral'. Not all respondents followed up with further comments on the breakout group sessions. Those who did felt the discussions were interesting and constructive, and they would like to be involved in future discussions and follow-up meetings etc. As with the comments on the whole event, there were some respondents who commented on the need for more tangible outcomes of the discussions. The full list of responses is given in Appendix 2.

What could RCPATH do more of to build productive partnerships between industry and pathology services? – Thoughts from delegates

Suggestions from 17 of the 23 respondents on what the College could do around industry partnerships included ideas on the RCPATH needing to take more of a convening role to bring together industry and other stakeholders to develop joint initiatives, and for the College to deliver similar and/or more regular industry forum events with more focused outputs and outcomes. The full list of responses to this question is given in Appendix 3.

Other general comments on the event included:

A very well hosted and managed event overall with good participant and an interesting spread of speakers. I selected Andy Clarke's presentation as the most interesting, but I could easily have chosen three. Thank you.

It might be worthwhile to get governmental representation from devolved nations to give update on their commitment to pathology too.

Great day, great agenda, great networking, thank you



Appendices

Appendix 1: All responses to question 4, 'Please give a short reason for your answer to question 3' (Question 3 was 'How useful did you find this event?')

The event helps bring together different voices e.g. industry, the college, fellows etc to discuss barriers, solutions and how we can capitalize on technology we have

As a private sector supplier of services to the NHS and more specifically, a supplier of services to many pathology networks, it was a fantastic opportunity to discuss and understand the idiosyncrasies across the networks and also define where pathways can be optimised

It seemed like a talking shop

Great that the RCPATH wants to work with and hear from industry. There's a lot we can do collaboratively.

Great agenda with useful content i can take back to AXREM members, and i feel there is a lot we could collectively work on with RCPATH

Gained a great understanding of the alignment of industry and RCPATH and some clear actions for me to influence

Very helpful meeting, excellent networking opportunity

Great networking and supporting industry discussions.

very engaging discussion with and excellent audience and presenters

Good update from NHS England and also good networking with industry ppl

Different perspective of hearing industry colleagues

Fabulous to hear industry perspectives on common NHS concerns and to look to work with them

It was a useful opportunity to understand potential partnership approach between industry, RCPATH and service providers to resolve the ongoing challenges with laboratory medicine

The discussion was open and inclusive, covered good ground and was informative. Questions I asked led to further discussion with others attending which was positive.

I miss the opportunity to talk more with other representatives of the industry, with the members of the Royal College, and especially with government decision makers who can influence the future of digital pathology.

I felt something tangible was missing.

A great way to understand the national picture and the strides being made to address the issues within the system. Most useful were the break out rooms. Having people across a range of disciplines was helpful in bringing new ideas to the table

Great discussions and ideas to take forward

Some interesting thoughts and potential solutions, without setting the world on fire

It was very helpful to hear the views from the NHS, DHSC, the industry and the pathologists. The points of coincidence and the gaps.

It was a great opportunity to connect with both existing and new industry partners, as well as healthcare providers and stakeholders.



Appendix 2: All responses to question 7, ‘Please give a short reason for your answer to question 6 (Question 6 was ‘How useful did you find the breakout group discussion sessions?’)

Conclusion was elusive
Could have done with more time and I am keen to be included in the action to have a workshop for AI in Digital Pathology
Generated ideas, great I hear industry perspectives
Good update and communication with colleagues
Great opportunity to have a deep dive discussion on a more defined topic on the challenges and opportunities presented by industry, RCPATH and service providers
I participated in the discussion about future RCP congress, and I found it very useful. I have been involved in the organisation of many conferences and I see the benefit for the college.
It was a great opportunity to hear diverse perspectives on the topic, connect with new colleagues, and discuss specific challenges and potential solutions. That said, it remains unclear to me what the impact of these discussions will be, or whether any concrete follow-up actions are planned.
Led to constructive discussion with agreed future steps
Lots of options and I was glad that I had two other colleagues who could attend other important streams.
Meeting with relevant people of interest and being able to discuss in an open forum what factors that I can specifically help with an influence change
My score should be discounted as I could not attend the break out sessions. an N/A option here would have been helpful
Please see previous response in question 4
the breakout sessions were too much general about healthcare and NHS but less about pathology, especially about digital pathology
The genomics breakout session was missing wider HCP attendance
the pathology/AI session led by Prof. Louise Jones was very useful with a proposal for a follow on workshop to progress the discussion
Useful to me as a facilitator - much to think over
Very interesting discussion
Very thoughtful discussion, and potential solutions/plans

Appendix 3: All responses to the question, ‘What could RCPATH do more of to build productive partnerships between industry and pathology services?’

Keep the dialogue going
Engage more with AXREM, we would like to build on the relationship and feel this can add real benefit to both of our organisations
More of this with tangible outcomes



Getting more engaged. It would be great to give permission for small exhibition of products too

Further Improve visibility and partnership opportunities e.g. a stand at NHS pathology conference

Expand the strategic partnership with industry in order to joint forces to get more funding and a better NHS

During the meeting, it became apparent that multiple activities are being organized independently by different industry partners in collaboration with the RCPATH. It would be valuable if RCPATH could play a more convening role by identifying opportunities for co-creation or joint initiatives, helping to connect stakeholders (e.g., pharma and diagnostics partners) and ultimately increasing the overall impact of these efforts.

hold these meeting more regularly

Hold more ecosystem (supplier/consumer) days. More happens when those with interest are in the same room.

Hold more similar events around other disciplines, I would actively encourage engagement with industry as Helen Dent mentioned this is key to achieving the pathology deliverables and best practice. Just adding to what Matt Johnson said, industry have skills that are untapped, such as tendering practice and guidance. That can improve outcomes and save money on tendering.

More workshops on how to navigate digital and AI adoption. Understand from pathologists what more they need from industry to make them feel comfortable navigating the changing landscape

Organize meetings and events where we can talk directly with the decision makers of the NHS policy

I like RCPATH plans for 2024-2029 for partnership with industry to collaborate on education, innovation and advocacy.

To have more such meetings

Set out some timeline guidelines for new genomics tests

Continue with this event series

More similar sessions. Facilitate more focused small group communication and activities

