



Recommendations for work space for consultant and associate specialist cellular pathologists

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Introduction

The Royal College of Pathologists' Specialty Advisory Committee on Cellular Pathology and Workforce Department advise that appropriate working conditions are essential to ensure accuracy in reporting, reduction in the risk of error, high productivity and the health and safety of doctors.

A cellular pathologist's office is not only an office in the conventional sense, but also a clinical work environment, as it is where the clinical diagnostic work is carried out. This function is analogous to an outpatient clinic room or an operating theatre.

Recommended standards are as follows.

1. The office

a. Sole use of an office

This is important for concentration, especially as many pathologists dictate their reports. It is not practical or acceptable for two doctors to dictate reports at the same time in one office.

The pathologist's office is also where the majority of trainee teaching occurs. A teaching session in progress would preclude use of the office for microscopic diagnosis and dictation by another pathologist.

There are also times when confidentiality is required (see Resources).

b. Location

The office should be within, or very close to, the cellular pathology department and not in a noisy environment.

Proximity of consultants to one another is necessary to facilitate communication and for conferring on difficult cases.

Cytopathologists' offices should be located near to the cytology screening laboratory. Separation of the consultant offices and the cervical screening laboratory was specifically highlighted as a contributing factor in the Wells report to the failures of the cervical screening services.¹

c. Lighting

The office should be well lit, preferably including a window allowing natural light. A poorly lit office impedes productive working (see Resources).

A balanced-arm adjustable lamp should be provided, as well as overhead lighting.

Windows should be fitted with adjustable blinds.

d. Temperature

The office should have adjustable temperature control (see Resources).

e. Storage

There should be adequate shelving for textbooks, journals and files and a lockable filing cabinet. Pathologists need ready access to their specialist books and journals to facilitate timely diagnoses.

f. Floor covering

The floor covering should be non-slip and should not impede the movement of chairs with castors.

g. Space

Digital pathology is becoming increasingly important. Therefore there should be sufficient space for dual monitors, each with sufficient resolution to assess cellular detail.

Storage and sufficient workspace should be provided to accommodate the slides and clinical documentation associated with the ongoing work/reporting.

This is in addition to the microscope area and a desk for normal office activities.

h. Security

The office should be lockable.

2. Equipment

a. Microscope

A consultant standard microscope with a teaching arm, digital camera and ability to make digital measurements is required. High-quality microscopy is essential for accurate diagnosis.

A teaching arm is important for training and conferring with colleagues on difficult cases. Ability to measure on screen improves accuracy in cancer cases for the diameter of tumours and the clearance of margins. It also improves productivity through time saved compared with manual measurement methods. A camera is needed to prepare images for projection at meetings and for publications.

b. Ergonomic seating, microscope head and desk

Cellular pathologists are susceptible to chronic neck and back pain, which can lead to periods of absence from work. Ergonomic working conditions are therefore important. The chair used for microscopy should be fully adjustable. The desk should be at a height that allows the microscope to be at the correct position for the pathologist; this might require the desk to be adjustable.

A chair for trainees, colleagues and other visitors should also be provided.

3. IT and connectivity

The consultant's office must have a modern computer with fast internet connection, an up-to-date browser, access to email and the pathology/hospital IT systems, local or networked high-quality printing facilities, dictation facilities and a telephone.

Reference

1. Wells W. *Review of Cervical Screening Services at Kent and Canterbury Hospitals NHS Trust*. London, United Kingdom: NHS Executive South Thames; 1997.

Resources

NHS England. *Confidentiality Policy*, June 2014.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/conf-policy-1.pdf>

This sets out the requirements placed on all staff when sharing information within the NHS and between NHS and non NHS organisations.

Health and Safety Executive. *Lighting at Work*, HSG38 (2nd edition), 1997.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg38.pdf>

Health and Safety Executive. *Temperature*.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/index.htm>

Guidance to help manage the temperature in the workplace.

NHS Estates. *Facilities for pathology services*, HBN 15, 28 April 2005.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/149167/HBN_15.pdf

Best-practice advice on the planning and design of accommodation for NHS pathology services.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing in Healthcare Partnership Group (HSWPG), *Workplace health and safety standards*, July 2013.

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/~media/Employers/Publications/workplace-health-safety-standards.pdf>

These standards provide a checklist which, if fully implemented, will help NHS organisations meet their legal duties and help them achieve the health and safety aspects of the NHS Litigations Authority (NHSLA) standards, Care Quality Commission (CQC) requirements and the Improving Working Lives initiative.