



Patient safety and quality strategy 2019



Introduction

The College has four overall strategic objectives. These are to:

- develop and maintain high standards of pathology education, training and research
- promote excellence and advance knowledge in pathology practice
- increase the College's influence through a clear, coherent professional voice
- resource the future of the College.

This strategy sets out how the College will support patient safety. It falls under the strategic objective to promote excellence and advance knowledge in pathology practice.

Patient safety is one of the most significant concerns across the NHS and a key priority for the College. It is about maximising the things that go right and minimising the things that go wrong for people experiencing health care. It is one of three components of quality in healthcare alongside clinical effectiveness and patient experience.

Three themes underpin this strategy: safety culture, continuous improvement, and encouraging involvement – of pathology professionals as well as patients, families, carers and other lay people – in the provision of ever safer care in pathology.

An important enabler of patient safety within a healthcare system is culture. In the UK, a shift is required from an approach that assumes care is safe until something goes wrong to one that recognises healthcare is 'high risk', accepts the inevitability of error and uses a systems approach to error in the context of a just culture. We must build safety into daily practice, be supportive when errors occur and respond by continuously learning, improving and sharing safety lessons. Effective leadership focused on a strong safety culture is essential to bring about the changes required.*

To create safer systems, pathology staff at all levels need an understanding of safety science, including how to understand and analyse systems to design safer, better care; how to learn from what works, as well as from what does not; and how to implement change in complex systems by using quality improvement (QI) tools and methodologies. In addition, improvements in safety are more likely to be effective if patients, and their families and carers, are actively involved.

* The features of a patient safety culture, as defined in NHS Improvement's *NHS Patient Safety Strategy* (2019), are: staff who feel psychologically safe; valuing and respecting diversity; a compelling vision; good leadership at all levels; a sense of teamwork; openness; and support for learning.

Purpose of this strategy

Through this strategy, the College aims to engage and empower pathologists and their teams, at all stages in their careers, to continuously improve the safety of the services and care they provide. The College will support the development of safer cultures and systems with patient-centred collaborative working across the interfaces of care.

We will work in partnership with our membership, patients, the public, specialist societies and external bodies to ensure that the contribution of all pathology specialties to patient safety and quality of care is recognised.

The College's vision of patient safety

- Compassionate professional leadership that supports a strong safety culture across all areas of service delivery including the importance of teamwork, staff psychological safety and wellbeing, and openness and support for learning.
- Increased capability and capacity for continuous improvement of safety and quality of care across the pathology workforce.
- Networked learning so that success and failures identified in one part of the system can be readily accessed, understood and built into others.
- Representation and involvement of pathology in local and national initiatives to improve patient safety.
- The voices of patients, their families and carers are heard at every level of the service.

Embed patient safety into pathology practice

Influence the national patient safety agenda to ensure that the regulatory, policy and political landscape recognises and supports pathologists and their teams to deliver ever safer healthcare

The College will:

- respond to national consultations relevant to patient safety in pathology, including those related to the potential impact of an insufficient medical and scientific workforce
- champion patient safety work by pathologists and their teams and support its dissemination
- contribute to building a learning and improvement culture through the medical examiner profession
- provide expert input into national patient safety initiatives
- work to ensure that systems implemented to collect, structure and use patient safety information have the functionality to provide insight into issues relevant to pathology and learning about what might be done to improve safety.

The College has longer-term aspirations to work in close collaboration with other royal colleges and national bodies in the UK with responsibility for patient safety to improve the coordination of messaging around safety and the consistency of education and training in patient safety.

Use the College's influence to put patient safety in the context of professionalism, culture, behaviour and attitudes

The College will:

- consider patient safety and quality issues across all College directorates
- raise awareness of patient safety among members through articles, opinion pieces, editorials and other media such as podcasts
- work with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges' proposed patient safety syllabus
- advise on patient safety and quality improvement elements in College curricula
- collaborate with the Care Quality Commission to develop an inspection framework for private pathology laboratories in England
- support safer systems for patients with complex needs via the Equally Well UK initiative.

Deliver the CPD framework and opportunities to support this plan

The College will:

- evaluate events and online resources to award CPD accreditation
- maintain a user-friendly CPD portfolio
- develop e-learning modules in a variety of specialties for the Barts Health eCPD app; for example, modules to support the implementation of clinical guidelines and patient safety bulletins.

Work with stakeholders to improve oversight, systems governance and funding of external quality assessment

The College will:

- support the development of a robust systems governance and assurance framework for external quality assessment (EQA), including a consistent approach to the identification and management of poor performance and a funding mechanism for the support services offered by the College
- develop and deliver a pilot project to determine the administrative support required for National Quality Assessment Advisory Panels.

Support pathologists and their teams to improve safety and quality of care

Provide high-quality tools and resources to support patient safety in pathology

The College will:

- deliver a patient safety awareness programme
- plan a safety culture and leadership workshop for pathology with the Academic Activities Working Group
- work with other organisations to raise awareness of the impact that culture has on safety and to understand the conditions that enable healthcare organisations to nurture and develop a culture of safety
- develop signposting to direct members to information on wellbeing.

The College has longer-term aspirations to:

- develop and promote a patient safety toolkit for pathology that will include resources on systems thinking and design, Safety I and II frameworks, proactive risk assessment and hazard analysis, human factors and ergonomics, and quality improvement methodologies
- collaborate with external partners to develop and promote safety culture or climate assessment tools for pathology to enable the identification and correction of latent organisational conditions that may lead to harm.

Develop a programme to improve the accessibility of quality improvement resources and tools

The College will:

- develop a plan to identify suitable resources, tools, methodologies, educational opportunities and options for networking to support pathologists with quality improvement
- develop guidance for trainers and educational supervisors on engaging pathology trainees in quality improvement
- promote the Continuous Quality Improvement Mentoring Scheme.

The College has longer-term aspirations to develop an online repository for quality improvement resources, including links to external information.

Deliver the agreed programmes to produce standards in pathology

The College will:

- deliver the agreed clinical guideline programme
- support specialty advisory committees (SACs) to develop specialty-specific key performance indicators to complement the College's generic key assurance indicators
- support the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges' Choosing Wisely initiative.

The College has longer-term aspirations to collaborate with external partners to develop a patient-centred demand optimisation workstream that ensures diagnostic testing is appropriate.

Deliver advice and support to healthcare organisations on managing performance issues in pathology

The College will:

- provide advice to members and healthcare organisations regarding issues of poor performance
- provide an invited review service to investigate performance issues within pathology departments and offer advice on appropriate steps to manage performance issues
- maintain and update performance review guidance to aid pathology departments in assessing clinical performance
- ensure reviewers performing invited reviews understand the role of organisational safety culture in determining safety and the use of a systems approach to error, including consideration of human factors.

Encourage shared learning to advance patient safety and quality improvement

Review and propose improvements to the dissemination and implementation of pathology standards, guidelines and initiatives

The College will:

- plan a multispecialty conference on patient safety with the Academic Activities Working Group, contributing to their annual schedule of conferences
- showcase accredited audits, templates and quality improvement projects to facilitate learning from excellence
- help members learn from patient safety incidents in other organisations by producing regular patient safety bulletins.

The College has longer-term aspirations to:

- use e-learning (including podcasts and webinars) to dissemination and support the implementation of College clinical guidelines and quality initiatives
- plan ways to deliver learning; for example, through online CPD modules and by sharing new and existing resources.

Support pathologists and their teams to review systems, processes and behaviours to build prevention and learning into the healthcare system

The College will:

- set up a specialty network of patient safety and improvement leads with the SACs to support specialty-specific safety and quality initiatives
- raise awareness of the planned national patient safety incident management system, which will include new mechanisms for sharing insight and information about patient safety and improvement issues.

The College has longer-term aspirations to:

- develop and promote a guide to assist pathologists and their teams when reporting and learning from errors and harm in pathology. The guide will maximise opportunities for learning from patient safety incidents and include guidance on reporting, safe sharing and scalable learning
- work with a future network of senior patient safety specialists.

Champion the voices of patients, their families and carers in pathology

Plan how to actively engage with patients, their families and carers, and other lay people to ensure their voices are heard

The College will:

- engage with other forums and organisations, such as the Patients Association and the Academy Patient Lay Committee, to inform the plan.
- champion patient and family involvement in patient safety work in pathology.

The College has longer-term aspirations to:

- develop workshops to explore how the experiences of patients, their families and carers are best captured in laboratory settings and used to drive improvement
- work with Patient Voices – an organisation that develops effective digital storytelling as an educational methodology and developmental tool – to explore the production and distribution of patient stories.

The Royal College of Pathologists is a professional membership organisation with more than 11,000 fellows, affiliates and trainees worldwide. We are committed to setting and maintaining professional standards and promoting excellence in the teaching and practice of pathology, for the benefit of patients.

Our members include medically and veterinary qualified pathologists and clinical scientists in 17 different specialties, including cellular pathology, haematology, clinical biochemistry, medical microbiology and veterinary pathology.

The College works with pathologists at every stage of their career. We set curricula, organise training and run exams, publish clinical guidelines and best practice recommendations and provide continuing professional development. We engage a wide range of stakeholders to improve awareness and understanding of pathology and the vital role it plays in everybody's healthcare. Working with members, we run programmes to inspire the next generation to study science and join the profession.

The Royal College of Pathologists

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