

## Summary of Issues Raised on the College Matters Visits



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The following is a summary of issues that have been raised at the College Matters meetings to date. There are still several more meetings to occur but it was felt useful to provide a summary of the matters already raised. These issues were discussed at the Council Meeting in Adelaide on 16 August 2007 and NZ members will have an opportunity to take up these and other issues with Bev at the Napier Conference later this month.

### PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

- There were concerns generally over the lack of awareness of what Pathologists do and what Pathology is all about.
- There was general support for PathWay, with quite a number of suggestions for articles.
- Concerns were raised about workload levels and there were requests to have workload guidelines.
- It was felt that Pathologists who are NATA/RCPA assessors should look at workloads, working conditions, and supervision arrangements. The College guideline needs to be reinforced with Pathology Assessors, although one Fellow who just went through NATA training indicated the guideline was included.
- There were concerns raised over the lack of support for Scientists and there was general support for a Faculty of Medical Scientists
- There were requests for the College to have a salary/conditions benchmarking survey and it was also suggested that a list of conditions and professional requirements that pathologists should expect in contracts would be useful.
- Some raised concerns that Universities are supporting scientists in Pathology Departments rather than Pathologists.
- In regard to the Scope of Practice Certificates sent out recently, there was a query as to whether AP included Cytopathology and this was confirmed as being the case. It was suggested that in times of workforce crisis these certificates may cause some problems in restricting what Pathologists can supervise and it was explained that this was one of the reasons Pathologists had requested such a document.
- Fees for NATA/RCPA accreditation visits were a concern to some. Questions were raised as to why there were no other providers of laboratory accreditation approved by the Commonwealth in Australia.

### WORKFORCE ISSUES

- The shortage was seen as obvious by the majority of attendees, however in Victoria one Fellow disputed that there was a shortage in the major metropolitan hospitals as there were a few vacancies.

At the same time other Victorian Fellows spoke of huge increases in workloads and minimal increases in pathologist numbers, but stated it was useless asking for additional resources.

There was a real lack of empowerment of pathologists.

- There was support for looking at the concept of Pathologists Assistants to do cut-up, pull slides for meetings, and be a general assistant.
- It was suggested that there should be pathology indicators like surgical waiting lists to show that there is a problem, e.g. turn around time.
- There was some frustration that Commonwealth Funding for training positions is not available for Public laboratories

### EDUCATION ISSUES

- Queries were raised as to future directions of continuing professional development (CPD) such as whether the CPDP should be more rigid (e.g. use Inview type modules).
- There was a suggestion that revalidation should be structured as part of employment arrangements however it was noted that there is little support from organisations for continuing education
- Concerns were raised over the paucity of Pathology taught in undergraduate curricula. The RCPA Core Pathology Curriculum was flagged. This had been sent to all medical schools in Australia and New Zealand and also to the AMC to try to enforce the curriculum via its accreditation of medical schools. Lobbying of Deans of Medical Schools is ongoing on this issue. Further the College has recently committed in principle to the development of early streaming for Pathology training for a small cohort of medical students at UNSW. The medical students would still attain a medical degree that will entitle them to full general medical registration.



## TRAINING/EXAMINATION ISSUES

- Some raised concerns about the number of AP exams and pass rates .
- The idea was raised of having open book exams.
- Funding has recently been obtained from the Commonwealth Government to develop formal mock examinations. These will complement existing past exam papers that are available and sessions provided by all Chief Examiners for trainees at the Update meeting.

## FUNDING ISSUES

- It was asked that when new items or changes in the schedule are being contemplated that the Fellowship be notified of the issues. However the problems with the confidentiality requirements of the Commonwealth in relation to PSTC restricting what the College can report to Fellows was explained and it was flagged that the College has requested that these provisions be relaxed so the Fellowship can be better informed.
- Funding for Second Opinions was raised as an issue and it was stressed that the College is 100% supportive of this and still pushing it at PSTC.
- In regard to concerns over AP funding, an update was given regarding progress with the relativity study.
- Several Fellows were concerned over a decision some 4-5 years ago relating to the changing of some skin items from Complexity Level 5 to level 3.
- Although there were frustrations that the MOU was not delivering fee increases, when asked for suggestions as to what would be a better model there was none forthcoming. There is a need to canvas the Fellowship further on this.
- There was support to commission a health economist to demonstrate the value of pathology to facilitate obtaining more money for the agreement. A suggestion was made that an actuary may be useful also.
- It was suggested that a number of models for funding Pathology should be developed and then provided to the Fellowship for discussion.
- Several small laboratory pathologists indicated that they would have been happy to contribute finance data to the relativity study but they were not members of the AAPP. They were reminded that they could join the RCPA QAP Benchmarking Program and contribute this way.
- A pathologist in a small clinical laboratory raised the issue that there are considerable costs associated with running such laboratories that small AP laboratories did not have to incur. This needs to be kept in mind.

## COLLEGE ADMIN ISSUES

- There was a lot of support for these College Matters meetings and it was suggested that it would be good to rotate venues.
- There were reports that some bulk emails are not received by Fellows due to hospital firewalls etc and that a personal hard copy letter inviting people may be required.
- Some concerns were expressed about how few Fellows and Trainees attended some events and it was suggested by those present that everybody should encourage others in their Departments to attend.
- It was requested that issues under discussion by the Advisory Committees be posted on the web-site and/or published in Pathology Today.
- It was noted that it is difficult for Fellows to attend the AGM in November and because of ASIC requirements it cannot easily be moved. There was support for an Extraordinary General Meeting to be held at each Update rather than changing the AGM time and this is likely to commence in 2008.
- The suggestion was made that consideration should be given to paying members of the Executive Committee.
- The small size of the Management Team in comparison to some Colleges was flagged and there was a suggestion that fees could be increased to provide more support.
- The College was noted to be in a continuing strong financial position.
- It is noted that the web-site is being updated because the current format of the document library is difficult to access. This is an important resource for Fellows as it contains many policy documents that may be of interest. One recently approved document in the Roles and Responsibilities section is the **Council Charter** that was approved at the March Council meeting. It details how the College Council, Executive Committee and Management Team operate and the roles and responsibilities of various members.