

**West Midlands Region of the Association of Clinical**

**Minutes of 59<sup>th</sup> Annual General meeting held on Tuesday 16th March 2010,  
Held at Birmingham Research Park, Vincent Drive, Birmingham 4.00pm**

**Apologies of absence received from**

N. Anderson, D. Kennedy, S. Smith, R. Webster, K. Gordon, C. Ford

**Minutes of the 58<sup>th</sup> AGM 31st March 2009**

The minutes were approved (AF) as a true record.

Copies of the 2009 minutes and annual reports are available at [www.acbwm.org.uk](http://www.acbwm.org.uk)

**Matters arising from the minutes**

None.

**Chairman's report (Prof. A. Fryer)**

A written report was presented.

The Chairman thanked M. Bignell for organising regional audit, and for the presentations at the Audit meeting. He also thanked C. Tomkins for organising the documents for the AGM. Nominations are invited for ACB honorary awards from the region. Please see A. Fryer with suggestions.

The forthcoming year is likely to be one of great change. We have seen changes since the Carter report, and changes to training through Modernising Scientific Careers. Need to be prepared to respond to lack of funding, trying to steer change rather than just reacting to change imposed upon us.

**Secretary's report (Mrs C. Tomkins)**

A written report was presented.

**Meeting Secretary's report (Dr. J. Middle)**

A written report was presented.

There has been a change of venue for regional meetings from Austin Court to the Birmingham Research Park, due to financial pressures. The latter venue has been provisionally booked for Weds 16<sup>th</sup> June and Weds 17<sup>th</sup> November.

J. Berg suggested holding a large meeting which attracts lots of delegates from outside the region, and charging a higher rate, e.g. £130 per delegate, in order to raise funds to subsidise other meetings. Would need to be planned 1 year in advance, possibly with a change to the June meeting hosting the Robert Gaddie trainees presentations, and the November meeting the large meeting, as it is not close to any other large meetings e.g. Focus. Possible larger venues are the lecture theatre being built at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, or Kingston Theatre at Austin Court. Suggestions for topics for meetings are welcome.

If anyone wants to borrow the WMACB projector and/or laptop, please let J. Middle know.

**Treasurer's report (Mr. J. Waldron)**

A written report was presented.

The finances are now all done centrally via the ACB office. Using the Research Park facilities for meetings is likely to mean that in the forthcoming year we can make a surplus on our meetings rather than a deficit as in 2009.

**Regional tutor's report (Dr. R. Webster not present)**



Dr. K. Gordon  
Dr. D. Kennedy

Ordinary Member  
Ordinary Member

**Invited Members**

Dr. M Bignell  
Mr. J O'Meara

Regional Audit Lead  
ACB Government affairs officer

**Any other Business**

Government Affairs Officer (J. O'Meara)

A written report was presented.

J O'Meara encouraged everyone to get involved with Labs Are Vital and be more outward looking to promote the profile of Pathology. Also, in the run up to the forthcoming General Election, the ACB is organizing a lobbying exercise using postcard-sized cards which can be personalized with contact details of local laboratories and sent to prospective Parliamentary candidates to encourage them to consider the role of Pathology, visit a lab, etc. Support from the members within each region will be essential to make this a success.

Promoting laboratory medicine (K. Chatha)

A written report was presented.

STEM is Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths/Medicine

Thanks to

The Chairman thanked A. Munro for his work on the WMACB and on the Clinical Practice Section. He retires this year.

## Chair's Annual Report 2010

### West Midlands Association for Clinical Biochemistry

The West Midlands Region continues to play an active role in taking the profession forward, both regionally & nationally.

#### Scientific Meetings

The West Midlands ACB held two one day scientific meetings during 2009-10: In June 2009 our focus was on; '*Diabetes: Quality & Management*', celebrating the contributions of two of our retiring members; Dr Jonathan Middle & Ms Janet Smith. In November 2009, the annual Robert Gaddie Scientific meeting began with sponsored trainee presentations followed by a review of requesting guidance from Dr Stuart Smellie and an afternoon on '*Current Topics in Cardiovascular Disease*'. Both meetings were well attended considering the current pressures on laboratory training budgets. Positive delegate feedback continues to reinforce our view that high quality scientific meetings are at the heart of an active and stimulating ACB region. The Annual General Meeting was held in March 2009 with Ian Barnes providing a fascinating insight into the fallout from the Carter Report ('What's next after Carter?').

#### Training

In 2009, we welcomed Pamela Sturges, Simon Whitehead, Kirrenjit Kaur and James Hawley as new Trainee Clinical Biochemists to the West Midlands ACB, while Chatha Kamaljit, Jane Dalley and Michael Cornes received their certificate of completion of Grade A training. It is hoped that this will be the start of long and productive careers in Clinical Biochemistry for all. There have also been notable FRCPath examination successes, Nicola Barlow, Chris Boot, Angela Kremmyda, (Part 1 Theory); Alison Armitage, Donna Fulerton, Rachel Marrington, Sarah Dowden, Julie Stinson, Claudia Tompkins (Part 1 Practical) and Raashda Sulaiman, Taruna Likhari (Part 2 Oral). Dr Rachel Webster, who took over as Regional Tutor from Dr David Vallance in 2009 is to be commended for excellent work – she certainly hit the ground running. Special thanks also go to the enthusiasm and hard work of Dr Clare Ford for her work on the Grade A training course.

In December 2009, Dr Peter Gosling stepped down as chair of the West Midlands Training Committee, a post that he has occupied with tireless dedication for over 9 years. In conjunction with the University of Birmingham, the Training Committee is developing the MSc as an distance learning package that will enable training to be delivered worldwide. In this regard, thanks should also go to Mr Craig Webster who has not only re-developed the West Midlands Training Course website (along with the Regional ACB website), but is tenaciously converting the MSc lectures into digital format for the distance learning package.

We also welcomed the trainees from other regions to the National Training Course which was held at the University of Birmingham in March. Many thanks to the organizing committee, spearheaded by David Vallance, Penny Clarke, Paul Griffiths, and Hazel Hutton, for organizing what was an immensely successful training course and included, for the first time, an opportunity to 'meet the patient'.

#### Events & Developments

This year's National Pathology Week was even bigger than last year's with regional hospitals organising laboratory tours, grand rounds and stands. The region also held a "Meet the Scientist" event at Thinktank Science Museum in Birmingham. The events have been published in the Royal College of Pathologists Bulletin and highlight the hard work and enthusiasm of the regional trainee biochemists and biomedical scientists. Feedback from the public and patients has been very positive and hopefully this year's events will build on last year's success. None of this could have been achieved in the region without the innovation, dedication and time of the Regional Trainees and the leadership of Kam Chatha, who took over the role of Promoting Laboratory Medicine representative from David Kennedy this year.

We would like to offer our congratulations to Dr Owen Driskell and Dr Rachel Marrington for being awarded prestigious National Institute for Health Research, Chief Scientific Officer Healthcare Scientist Fellowships, raising the profile of research within Clinical Biochemistry.

Dr Jonathan Berg continues his excellent work on the national Pathology Harmony project with phase II recommendations being addressed not only for Clinical Biochemistry but, for the first time, for Haematology and Immunology at a national conference in Birmingham in November 2009.

This year, regional audit has been given a much needed fillip, thanks to the drive & determination of Dr Michelle Bignell, who took over as Regional Audit Lead. She has already arranged several regional meetings and has an audit programme that includes assessments of faecal sample testing and use of the PSA test across the region, with many more to come. Audit will now form part of the programme for the revised AGM format in March 2010.

**And finally.....**

Many thanks must go to all regional members who give up their time to support the West Midlands ACB and its committee, especially new members to the committee: Craig Webster (Vice Chairman), Claudia Tomkins (Secretary), Julian Waldron (Treasurer), Rachel Webster (Regional Tutor), Kam Chatha (Promoting Laboratory Medicine) and Kirsty Gordon (Ordinary Member).

We also said farewell to Ms Janet Smith and Dr George Gray who retired from routine clinical duties this year. They have each made significant contributions to the ACB at a local and national level. We wish them all a long and happy retirement and we hope they will continue their long and fruitful association with the WMACB into the future.

Prof Tony Fryer.

Chair: West Midlands Association for Clinical Biochemistry  
March 2010

Secretary's Annual Report 2009-10

Regional committee meetings were held on the following dates:

30/06/09	Austin Court, Birmingham
18/11/09	Austin Court, Birmingham
16/03/10	Research Park, Vincent Drive, Birmingham

Attendance has been good at all three meetings.

Topics discussed have included: regional scientific meetings, regional audit, ACBWM website, ACB Council matters, Promoting Laboratory Medicine activities and Modernising Scientific Careers.

An ordinary member position and the Clinical Practice Section representative member invited position on the Committee have become available this year.

Claudia Tomkins  
March 2010

## Meetings Secretary Report for the ACB West Midlands AGM, 16th March 2010

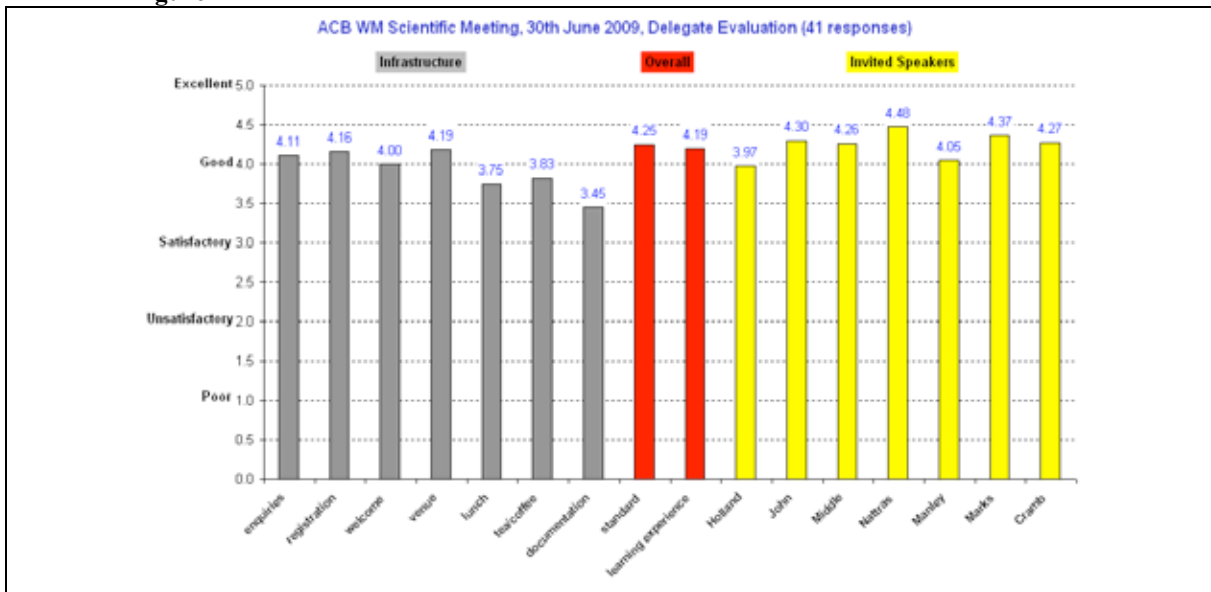
- **Preamble**

- **Venues** : The relationship with Austin Court continues to work well, but for cost reduction purposes it has been decided to try less expensive venues. To this end the University Research Park conference suite is being tried for the first time for the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010 meeting. This has many advantages for meetings up to 60 persons – lower cost, free car park, close to rail network etc. Since final numbers for meetings have slipped below the 70 maximum at Austin Court, it is an excellent option now. The main issue is that bookings have to be made well in advance if both rooms and the kitchen are required.
- **Meeting Registration website** : seems to be working well
- **Publicity** : We seem to be doing just fine with JISCMail (Mailbase), ACB News Sheet and the ACBWM website
- **Presentation equipment** : The laptop and projector are working well and are available from me for all other regional activities.
- **Thanks to** : I am grateful once again to my occasional helpers on the registration desk especially Claudia this last year.

- **30th June 2009 Meeting - “Diabetes: Quality & Management (but not the CPA type!)”**

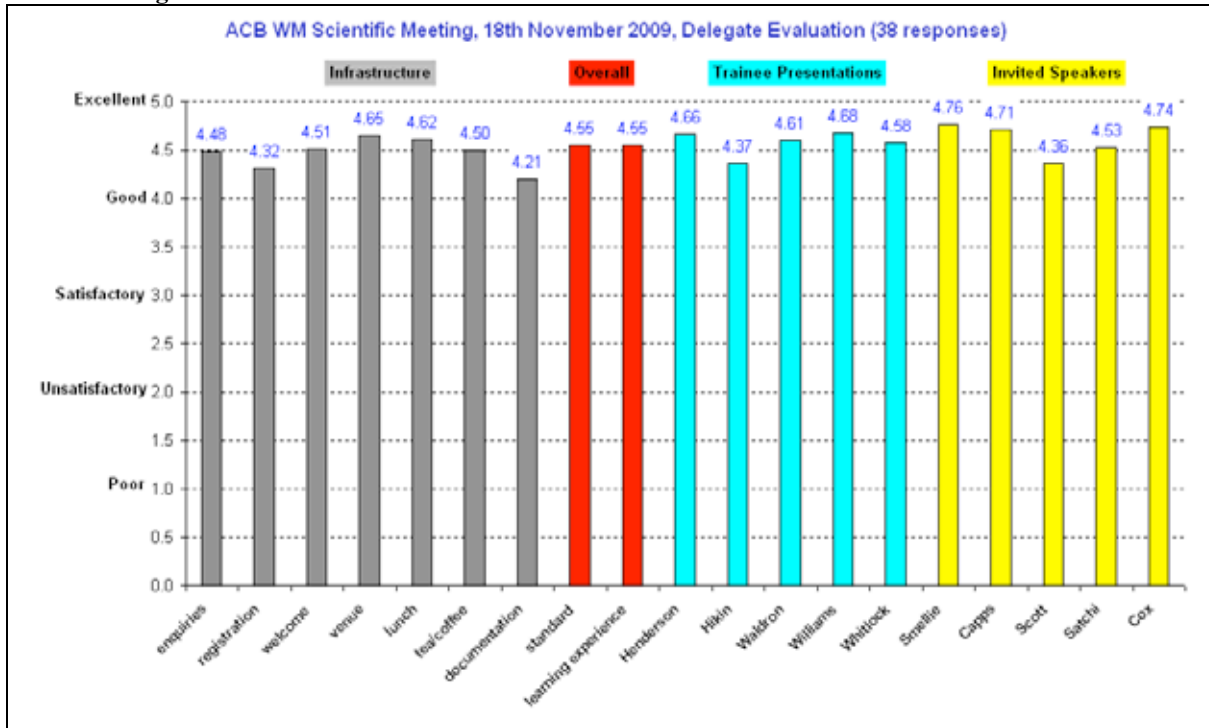
- This attracted a good attendance once again. The evaluation results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1



- **18<sup>th</sup> November 2009 - Robert Gaddie Meeting and Cardiovascular theme**
  - This meeting comprised five excellent Randox-sponsored Trainee presentations and a range of varied other talks. Figure 2 shows the evaluation data, which includes some very high scores!

**Figure 2**



- **Gaddie Poster Prize, Audit and AGM – 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010**
  - I have had a good response for the Gaddie Poster Prize, and at the time of writing (2<sup>nd</sup> March 2010) about 30 persons have registered from the ACB WM region. No-one from outside the region has yet registered.
- **Preparation for the June and November meetings this year**
  - I need urgent input for proposed dates and themes please, so that I can check for clashes and book venues.
- **My Future**
  - I have stepped down as UK NEQAS Organiser now and my part time contract will finish on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010. I am remaining professionally active on UK NEQAS, IFCC and CLSI Committees for a while and am happy to remain as Meetings Secretary whilst a member of the ACB, if that is the wish of the membership.

**Jonathan Middle (Meetings Secretary), 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2010**

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### **Treasurers' report**

End of year statement for 2009: **£13,726.66** (starting balance 1/1/09 was 15,236.62).

For the 3 regional meetings held, losses were made:

1. 31/3/09 meeting £401.56
2. 30/6/09 meeting £563.45
3. 18/11/09 meeting £113.50, despite £500 sponsorship

For future meetings, sponsorship will need to be sought in order to make a return. Hopefully the accounting problems with ACB office have been resolved and regular statements will be available.

Julian Waldron  
March 2010

## **Report to ACB West Midlands**

### **Regional Tutor's Report**

**Dr RL Webster    ACBWM meeting March 16<sup>th</sup> 2010**

#### **Pre-Registration trainees**

##### MSc

The MSc has moved to the school of Cancer Sciences within the college of Medical and Dental sciences and that there have been a 'few' teething problems associated with this move.

##### 2010 In-take

We appear to have been inundated with possible applicants this year and I would like to thank Craig Webster, Jonathan Berg and David Vallance for arranging the majority of the visits. The deadline for the September in-take has passed and we are now waiting for the application forms to arrive. Interviews will be held at New Cross Hospital on April 15<sup>th</sup> 2010. Nottingham and Leicester will also be interviewing on the same day in the same location to make it easier for those candidates who have applied to all 3 centres.

#### **Post registration trainees**

##### **New appointments**

Rachel Henderson	Band 7 (4yr)	Birmingham Heartlands Hospital
Hazel Borthwick	Band 8a	University Hospital of North Staffs

##### FCRPath Exam successes

##### Part 1 Theory – Autumn 2009

Nicola Barlow  
Chris Boot  
Angela Kremmyda

##### Part 1 Practical – Autumn 2009

Sarah Dowden  
Julie Stinson  
Claudia Tompkins

##### Part 2 Oral – Autumn 2009

Taruna Likhari (SpR)

##### Essay sessions

Joanne Duffy is now on maternity leave and the essay sessions are being co-ordinated by Kam Chatha. Thank you to everyone who contributes to the running of these sessions.

#### **ACB Regional Tutors Meeting**

The last meeting was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009 in London at the ACB office. Various issues were discussed.

1. Trainees log book

The current version is being updated and is currently up for discussion amongst the regional tutors. When the content has been agreed and approved, it will be available as an electronic document. This should reduce the amount of photocopying required around assessment time.

2. MSC

A consultation meeting was being held the following week and feedback will be circulated in due course

3. ACB Training course – London April 2011

London region have been unable to arrange suitably priced accommodation for this training course due to the change in University holidays. Birmingham may host this training course with the London region still organising the academic component. Hazel Borthwick is discussing the possibility of this with the University of Birmingham

4. Accredited labs

All the West Midlands labs are up to date.

**MSC - Genetics pilot**

I have been approached by Val Davison regarding the Biochemistry training element for the Genetics pilot scheme. There are 6 trainees who will require a 12 week work placement in a Biochemistry department (3 in Nov 2010 and 3 in April 2011). A meeting was held with the heads of our regions training laboratories and we have agreed to provide these placements and are currently compiling a basic log book for each of the participating laboratories to follow. More information to follow as and when I receive it.

**ACB Workforce Advisory Committee Annual Report**  
**Dr DT Vallance    ACBWM AGM**

**1. Work Force Statistics**

The effect of MSC on the workforce is unknown but the Workforce Advisory Committee can only work with the statistics and system that is already in place for the current trainees progressing through the system.

- New trainees are mostly female, although more male trainees are now coming through.
- A large number of trainees will exit training in Sept 2010 and due to the net loss of Band 8 posts, HSTs may be competing for Band 7 posts.
- The statistics show there are still a large number of retirements looming.
- Over next 8 years there will be 281 retirements and 256 trainees completing their training.
- There will be a large number of retirements in Scotland over the next 8 years.
- ACB data base will be modified to include those who retire but return to work part-time.

**2. Consultant Clinical Biochemistry: the Future**

The final version of the Profession Under Siege II (PUS II) document has been published. This was an electronic survey of Consultants in Clinical Biochemistry carried out by the RCPATH and the ACB regarding their workload and generic questions regarding their hospital and laboratory. Main points from the document are as follows:

- Workload has continued to rise in laboratories (50% since previous survey).
- Biggest increase is in GP workload.
- 77% of Consultants felt there would be insufficient staffing to cope with the workload by 2013.
- Many Consultants thought that IT was the main area that needed improvements.
- There has been an increase in the amount of clinical advice that is given out of hours and over the phone. More guidelines are required in these areas.
- The Consultant Clinical Scientist age distribution is unbalanced compared to that of medics who have a slightly better age profile.

The survey is available on the RCPATH website. There is also a six-step tool for staffing at the end of the report which can calculate how many staff are required based on workload.

**3. MSC: Workforce implications**

WAC is concerned that MSC will go ahead without proper workforce planning using inadequate or incorrect workforce data.

- Collinson Grant (a consultancy company) have requested workforce data from the ACB in the trial project they are running for MSC workforce profiling.
- Medical Education England (MEE) Healthcare Scientists Programme Board's Workforce Committee decided that in England, SHAs will collate the Healthcare Science workforce plans on the basis of employers working in partnerships with Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). These will be scrutinised and approved by the MEE Healthcare Scientist Sub-Committee and this will underpin the decisions regarding the number of trainees to be recruited to specific local Health Care Science training programmes at the different levels. Separate arrangements are being made for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Workforce planning appears as though it will be carried out at SHA level. Data is already being pulled from the electronic workforce records from some SHAs. This is concerning as it is relying on the correct data being entered into the electronic staff record to start with.

Please ensure that the Workforce Advisor (and Regional tutor if appropriate) are informed when clinical scientists posts are created, filled, frozen or lost.

**Association for Clinical Biochemistry West Midlands Region  
Federation of Clinical Scientists Regional Representative's Report 2009-2010**

Although it is over five years since Agenda for Change (AfC) was introduced, FCS has nevertheless still been involved in a significant number of unresolved AfC banding and assimilation issues. Payment of correct back-pay entitlement has also been an issue in some cases, becoming increasingly more complex, the longer the delay in assimilation. This year, even in the West Midlands there have been instances of unresolved bandings affecting clinical scientists, dating back to October 2004.

FCS has also been actively involved in further discussions regarding attempted harmonisation of on call payments under AfC terms and conditions.

An increasing number of issues affecting clinical scientists are arising from organisational change and/or transfer of undertakings arrangements, worryingly sometimes including the possibility of redundancy. Though this may not yet have had a major direct effect on the West Midlands Region, in today's financial climate and with continuing moves to examine and rationalise clinical laboratory services, it makes it all the more important for FCS to have strong representation in all organisations that could be potentially affected by this. Consequently, it is very important that we have FCS local representatives in all our NHS Trusts with FCS members.

If your Trust still does not have a local FCS representative, please do your utmost to appoint one and inform me. Once I am informed about the appointment of a new local representative, I then have to write formally to the Trust HR director requesting their recognition of the new representative. Without this step, any new FCS representative may not be recognised by their Trust and formally allowed to function as an accredited local FCS representative on such issues as organizational change, within that Trust.

The importance of adequate training for FCS representatives is being increasingly recognised. In line with this, two excellent and well attended training days took place during the year. The first, in Birmingham, was a basic induction day for local representatives, and the second, in Tooley Street, was mainly for regional representatives on the topic of organizational change, highly relevant in the light of the aforementioned increasing FCS workload relating to that issue.

On the pay front, we are now nearing the start of the third year of the three year NHS pay agreement. Although there was originally considerable doubt regarding the wisdom of accepting a three year deal, in today's financial climate the third year pay increase of 2.25 percent has proven to be significantly more favourable than that for many other workforces. There was consequently no pressure from Staff Side to reopen negotiations for the third year of the agreement. Beyond this current pay agreement, it seems more likely that pay increases will be significantly more restrained.

The NHS Pensions Choice Exercise has been slightly delayed, but it is vital that in the coming months, NHS members give due consideration to the relative benefits of the existing and new pension schemes. For West Midlands members, pensions statements for those aged 50 or over are expected to be available between July and September this year, and for the under 50s between April and June 2011.

FCS has again been involved in a number of national consultation exercises, often complementing the role of the ACB itself, sometimes with a particular emphasis on implementation. Consultation has particularly embraced the Modernising Scientific Careers proposals, with a major part of the last FCS National Committee Meeting being devoted to this topic. Other consultation matters have included reform of professional regulation and revalidation.

Once again I would like to thank the National FCS officers, especially Geoff Lester and Roberta Goodall, for their unstinting hard work on behalf of us all. Their expertise and advice is invaluable, both leading and representing FCS nationally on major issues, and in helping regional representatives such as myself deal with local issues and cases that do arise from time to time.

David Andrews, March 2010

- Training course trainees

**2009 Intake** – Four trainees Started in September at University Hospitals of Coventry and Warwick, New Cross Hospital, University Hospital of North Staffs and Heart Of England Foundation Trust. One Trainee has since moved from UHNS to Sandwell and West Birmingham to City Hospital.

**2008 Intake** – The four Trainees from this year group are completing work for their MSc.

**2007 Intake – Trainees are currently due to complete their secondment this year with two Trainees currently at Birmingham Children's Hospital.**

**2006 Intake – One Trainee secured a substantive post inside the region at HEFT and another from this intake has moved to a substantive post in the Trent region. The remaining two trainees are on 12 month extensions to their contracts at their base hospitals.**

- **Trainees with a substantive post**

We currently have 12 Pre-Registration Trainees (2 on short term extensions and one on a Research Fellowship) and 22 Registered Trainees (all substantive).

- FRCPath Successes

Angela Kremmyda	FRCPath Part 1 (written)	RSH
Dr Nicola Barlow	FRCPath Part 1 (written)	SWBH
Dr Chris Boot	FRCPath Part 1 (written)	UHB
Sarah Dowden	FRCPath Part 1	BCH
Claudia Tomkins	FRCPath Part 1	UHCW
Dr Julie Stinson	FRCPath Part 1	UHCW

- MSc/Regional Training Course

The next Training Course is in Oxford and most of the Pre-Registration Trainees will be attending.

- ACB Training Courses

A number of trainees are not able to travel to Glasgow for Focus 2010 but of those that are going most are presenting posters.

- **Tutorials/Meetings/Conferences**

The MRCPATH tutorials organised by Jo Duffy (nee Heynes) were well attended by those preparing for the part 1 prior to September. Subsequently the reduced number of Trainees at this stage has meant they were not well attended in the run up to the March Exam.

- **Promoting Laboratory Sciences**

Kam Chatha (HEFT) with the Promoting Laboratory Sciences Group organised a meet the scientist event at Birmingham's Think Tank Science Museum during the October half term break. This was well staffed by Trainees from the region who used fake patient samples to explain the concepts of how tests help in diagnosis. The event included Demonstrations of the work done in Biochemistry aimed at a wide audience group from young children to adults attending the museum. National Pathology Week was marked by a number of events around the region including talks for Schools in Stoke on Trent and a stand explaining the Day in the life of a biochemist at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital organised by Trainee Jenna Waldron.

**The next ACB Trainees Committee will be on 26<sup>th</sup> March.**

## **Regional Audit Report for 2009 – 2010**

It is always a pleasure to report on a success and the establishment of a Regional Audit Group is just that.

Since our last AGM in March 2009 we have established a group of ~12 biochemists, representing almost as many hospitals from across the region, with an interest in audit. The hospitals represented are University Hospital North Staffordshire, Staffordshire General Hospital, Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Heartlands Hospital, University Hospital Birmingham, University Hospital Coventry, Russells Hall Hospital, City Hospital, Birmingham Children's Hospital, Birmingham Women's Hospital, along with Birmingham Quality (aka NEQAS), with expressions of interest from other colleagues in the region.

We have met three times since July with our next meeting scheduled in April. We have initiated and undertaken 2 regional audits – the inter-laboratory reporting time audit and the faecal analysis survey/FOB audit – presented at this meeting.

We intend to continue to meet – currently at the Children's Hospital, approximately 3 – 4 times a year and are planning to re-audit PSA analysis in the coming year and possibly an audit on 'investigating hypoglycaemia protocols'.

At a national level – the national audit group met twice this year in the ACB Office in Tooley Street in March and September 2009.

The Focus 2009 Audit Session was very successful with good attendance. Two national audits – thyroid hormone testing and interpretative comments were presented and are in the process of being written up. Other audits for oral presentation at this session were selected from the wide range of abstracts submitted for poster presentation. No such session is planned for Focus 2010 but there will almost certainly be one in 2011. It has been suggested that there be a National Audit meeting in either summer or autumn 2010 but no details are available to date.

There have been issues with the national audit website and secure access to it – which have now largely been resolved with the site being in the ACB members area and it is hoped that more regions will populate it with their audit questionnaires and findings.

UK labs were asked to participate in a European audit on cardiac markers, BNP etc. This was a long questionnaire and received a mixed reception!

Eric Kilpatrick plans to retire as the Chairman of the National Committee at our next meeting on 23 March 2010. Nominations from outside the committee will be considered.

M. Bignell, March 2010

**ASSOCIATION FOR CLINICAL BIOCHEMISTRY**  
**GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS OFFICER**  
Update Report to West Midlands Region Committee 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010

## **Media and Communications Training**

The original programme of training agreed by the ACB Executive has now been completed. No decision has been made as yet for any future programme or courses. The different training options we have used proved to be highly successful and cost effective so I am hopeful that we will be able to arrange further courses in the future.

The discussions that have been going on with similar organisations to the ACB that represent clinical scientists in other disciplines have highlighted many areas of common interest. One of those is Media and Communications training and there is scope for us to arrange training courses that we could charge their members to attend. We could charge at more than cost and still represent good value so there is scope for subsidising our own members! For example, the British psychological society is organising an overview training day for which it will charge its own members £200 and members of other organisations £260. Our costs for almost identical courses in the past were £50 per delegate; we could charge £100 per delegate to outsiders for half the available places, and train our own members for nothing. A simplistic view, but it demonstrates the basic idea!

There is also scope for other types of training. Courses could be arranged locally for individual regions, possibly associated with scientific meetings; half day sessions on a limited topic range rather than the usual one day sessions could be arranged.

*I would be happy to discuss any ideas or suggestions from WM committee.*

## **Contact with other organisations**

The potential advantages of greater collaboration with other bodies was mentioned in my last report. I have managed to identify contacts in most of the likely “contenders”. In addition to this, our President arranged a meeting recently to discuss possible future collaboration on a variety of common themes with those organisations. The meeting was very positive and a raft of possible areas of collaboration were identified with most of the other bodies keen to explore them in more detail. The most significant from my own perspective were in Public Affairs/Public Relations and Media training.

Another area that might be of particular interest to the WM Committee was the possibility of arranging scientific meetings jointly to minimise administrative and venue costs; this would be feasible whether or not the scientific programmes were also planned jointly..

*I would be happy to discuss.*

## **Labs Are Vital™**

There is a new resolve from the Executive and working party to focus on a programme of action and raise engagement with politicians, managers and the public to the highest priority level. Material for the site (past experiences, clinical vignettes, and so on) is very slow in emerging from the membership.

*I would appreciate input from the West Midlands both in terms of material to be added to the website and suggestions for its improvement.*

## **Active Engagement in Public Affairs**

The ACB Executive has given the go-ahead to a mass lobbying exercise in advance of the General Election. A postcard to be sent to prospective Parliamentary candidates has been prepared (a soft copy to be circulated with these notes and I will bring hard copy examples to the meeting). This will be impractical to undertake on a purely central basis and I am looking to the Regions to organise the exercise locally. We are purchasing lists of prospective candidates and will be able to supply (I anticipate) address labels for the prospective candidates with the Regions identifying local contacts.

*I hope we will have time for a discussion on this topic. As usual, I am looking to the West Midlands Region, as a well organised group, to help identify the best “logistical” approach to take. I am hoping we won’t be “caught on the hop” by a sudden election announcement!*

*Joe O’Meara  
3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2010.*

### **Promoting Laboratory Medicine Group Report for the AGM 2010**

This year the group has been involved in a number of public events, which has built upon the success of the previous year.

After the success of “Meet the scientist” at Thinktank Science Museum, the group was asked to do the same for National Pathology week. The event was organised by the regional trainees who put a lot of effort into making the event popular and engaging for the public. The group does have to thank David Kennedy for providing the POCT devices and other material for the experiments, Joe O’Meara for his support and Vivek Mudaliar for setting up his own stand there and publicising the event with the Birmingham Mail.

National Pathology Week also went very well with stands, grand rounds and lab tours being organised across the region. The publicity material we received this year was excellent. These events were reported in the Royal College Bulletin, however not all events were reported back so we have been under-represented as a region. If an event has been held please send a report with pictures to the College and it will be published.

The group was also asked to give talks at both FOCUS and IBMS Congress by Labs are Vital, to promote the new material available on the website and encourage more scientists to organise public events.

We have also been approached to organise more events with the Royal College in the region with their representative Vivek Mudaliar. We are waiting to hear what ideas and events will be organised.

I would like to thank all the people involved in organising these events, particularly the trainee biochemists, as the events could not have occurred without them and to the supervisors for letting them have the time. I would also like to ask that supervisors encourage the newer trainees to participate and email me if they wish to contribute.

In the coming year we will be organising more events, however I would like to encourage everyone who are taking part in these event to become registered as STEM ambassadors. There is strong push from the Department of Health to set up a network of science ambassadors to raise awareness of career opportunities and we need to be represented within this network. You can register on [www.stemnet.org.uk](http://www.stemnet.org.uk) and you will undergo a free CRB check and induction.

Kamaljit Chatha