

## ACB CPS Annual Report 2006

2006 was the year to consolidate the structure and membership of the Clinical Practice Section (CPS), the new section officially launched at Focus 2006 in Brighton. We have published an introductory article in the ACB News, distributed the CPS information leaflet and organised the first meeting of the prospective members of the section at Focus. We were delighted that the CPS Chairman, Mike Toop, was awarded the President's Shield at Focus 2006 for his work that had led to the launch of the Section.

In October 2006, the annual meeting of the consultant chemical pathologist and specialist registrar club in Swindon afforded a chance for interested members to join specialist groups and also provided an opportunity to plan the future direction of the section. This was organised, as before, by Bob Cramb, and was supported by an educational grant from Astra Zeneca. The meeting included an update for consultants on issues such as Carter Review, teaching, modernising medical careers and metabolic medicine. It also provided an opportunity to discuss contracts and job plans. However, the most important part were the joint (consultant and SpR) sessions that aimed to establish the membership of the specialist groups that together form the CPS Special Interest Division. These groups include Cardiovascular Risk and Lipids, Diabetes Mellitus, Inborn Errors of Metabolism, Metabolic Bone Disease and Renal Stones, and Nutrition.

The groups have now set up a number of projects, with particular emphasis on clinical laboratory support for different specialties and as well as more general work related to training, examinations and best practice. Members have contributed to an ongoing series in the BMJ on pitfalls in laboratory medicine and to the series of best practice reviews currently being produced across the laboratory medicine disciplines. The division lead, Stuart Smellie, sits on the NICE type 2 diabetes guideline development group, which will be producing its revised guidelines in 2008. The division is also working to produce a web facility to allow members more direct communication during ongoing projects. As an example of the work of an interest group, the Nutrition Group led by Bill Simpson, sees itself as a communication, self help and advice network, which aims to address training within the specialty, contribute to Focus 2007 and 2008, interact with other specialist organizations in the field, and provide an updated knowledge base as well as local protocol sharing for its members.

During 2006 the Professional Affairs Division of the CPS developed a questionnaire relating to job plans, which was sent to the consultant chemical pathologist members of the ACB. The results of this survey will serve to build a database of information on current consultant job plans throughout the United Kingdom with a view to sharing this information amongst members. This division is also contributing to the Clinical Excellence award process in England and Wales, along with the Royal College of Pathologists.

### **Current challenges.**

**Education and training.** There is a concern about the undergraduate and postgraduate education in clinical chemistry. The current integrated courses at universities largely dispensed with specific teaching of laboratory medicine: the question remains whether learning laboratory medicine solely in context is sufficient for young doctors to learn how to use laboratories efficiently. In addition, relatively little is said about clinical biochemistry in FY1 /FY2 training curricula. At the same time, efficient use of laboratories increasingly requires not only medical knowledge but also specialised skills in data handling. For consultants, the important issue is how to balance the strictly specialist training and development of clinical expertise with training in management and leadership skills.

**Research.** The state of research in laboratory medicine remains a major concern, in the face of the continuing shrinkage of the academic base of clinical chemistry and loss of academic posts in the United Kingdom. The CPS plans to work with other organisations such as the Royal College of Pathologists to define a research strategy for the discipline; this will be particularly important for the specialist registrars, for whom access to academic experience is a valuable part of training - something that may well be a defining factor for their future career.