

ACB Clinical Practice Section Report 2008

The ACB Clinical Practice Section (ACB CPS) promotes direct clinical care within chemical pathology, encourages medical graduate involvement in the ACB and supports medical training programmes. It also represents professional interests of medical staff within our specialty.

In 2008 the CPS continued to pursue its major aims, which are:

- raising the profile of clinical practice within the clinical biochemistry community;
- informing the wider healthcare community of the medical work within clinical biochemistry;
- supporting best clinical practice by clinical biochemists.

The Director of the ACB CPS is Ceridwen Coulson. The Section has three divisions – Specialist Interests, led by Stuart Smellie; Training, Education and Academic Development, led by Pat Twomey; and Professional Affairs, led by Robert Cramb. Marek Dominiczak is Director of Communications. Danielle Freedman chairs the Clinical Excellence Nominations Committee. The Section has a steering group that includes executive and regional representatives. Membership of the Section is open to all ACB members: interested individuals should contact enquires@ACB.org.uk. Medical graduates who join the ACB automatically become members and clinical scientists are very welcome.

The ACB CPS has had an active and productive year, consolidating its work in some areas and developing several new ventures.

Promoting clinical biochemistry

Dr Ceridwen Coulson spoke at the Primary Care Live Conferences, which are some of the largest events in primary care in the UK. This was organised in both London and Manchester, attracting a large number of general practitioners and other primary health care professionals. An ACB exhibition at both centres was ably manned by several volunteers, highlighting the value of clinical biochemistry to a wide range of healthcare staff.

There will be another excellent opportunity to discuss the value of clinical biochemistry to clinical care at several BMJ Masterclass sessions that are planned through 2009.

Work of the Specialist Interests Division

The Division delivers its work through the Specialist Interest Groups, which include Cardiovascular Disease Prevention, Endocrinology and Diabetes, Nutrition, Bone Metabolism, Inborn Errors of Metabolism, and Best Practice in Clinical Biochemistry. This structure is intended to be flexible and allows groups of people with common interest to come together.

Importantly, in 2008 we saw increased consultative activity of the Division. Members of the different groups contributed to further guidance in the primary care 'Better Testing' series and started a popular series of clinical articles for general practitioners in Pulse magazine, which is continuing into 2009. This helps to increase the profile of laboratory medicine in the primary care sector. We are increasingly being asked to respond to guidelines produced and to contribute to clinical authoring, which is very much in keeping with the clinical knowledge and information service the labs provide, as highlighted in Lord Carter's second report.

Members of the ACB CPS have collated consensus guidance on the test content of commonly requested profiles. Work is also in progress on an article discussing the current approach to minimum re-test intervals.

Rewarding Professional Excellence

The ACB nominates candidates for Clinical Excellence Awards. The CPS Clinical Excellence Nominations Committee works closely with the Royal College of Pathologists in this matter: in 2008/09 we put forward 6 Bronze and 3 Silver award nominations.

Contribution to scientific meetings

The ACB CPS hosted a session at FOCUS, which considered NICE nutrition guidelines (Carel le Roux) and cardiac markers (Steve Martin), and finished with a stimulating presentation from Professor Paul Glasziou, Director of the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine in Oxford on evidence-based clinical monitoring.

Traditionally, the CPS has a major input to the meeting of Consultants and Specialist Registrars in Chemical Pathology, which in 2008 took place in Northampton. This was organised, as before, by Bob Cramb, and was supported by an educational grant from Astra Zeneca. At the meeting, the Specialist Interest Groups discussed a range of topical issues, such as, for instance, the latest NICE lipid treatment guidelines. Ideas were also formulated for a new Venture Publications book.

Members Mailbase

In early 2009 we finally managed to complete the long-planned mailbase for CPS members, which we hope will facilitate bringing people together around issues of common interest. The mailbase gives us a valuable tool to contact medics and scientists specifically involved in particular clinical fields. To have your name added to the mailbase please email the ACB at admin@ACB.org.uk.

Looking to the future

The Section is enthusiastic about working with the Scientific Committee to develop a central knowledge resource that brings together best practice guidance and commissions new studies to provide an up to date view of the clinical utility and performance of biochemical tests. This is an exciting development and we look forward to the challenge.

February 2009