

## **ACB Council March 2006**

### **Government Officer**

As agreed at the last Council meeting, a Government Officer has been appointed by the ACB. Janet Smith was delighted to introduce Dr Joe O'Meara to Council. Joe will be familiar to many ACB Members. He was a Clinical Biochemist, working at East Birmingham (now Heartlands) Hospital until the early 1990s and he was also ACB News editor. Joe addressed Council at this meeting and gave a brief overview of the tasks he will be undertaking in the forthcoming months. He will be communicating with ACB Members directly, through ACB News and via the ACB website. Further information can be obtained from these sources.

### **Regional Structures**

ACB Executive asked the National Members, Dr Ceridwen Coulson, Dr Ian Godber and Dr Brian Senior, to seek views on the effectiveness of the Association, particularly with regard to the structure and functioning of the regional groupings and also the way in which the Association interacts with the NHS in a changing environment.

In particular, the following questions were posed:

- Is the current Regional structure appropriate?
- Are communication lines appropriate?
- Are further lines of communication needed below Regional level?
- Is representation per Region appropriate?
- Should the level of representation reflect numbers of Members in the 'constituency'?
- Should 'constituencies' be smaller – e.g. local networks, SHA level?
- Are there better ways to communicate with a) the membership and b) the NHS structure?
- What roles should the Regions be playing?

The National Members posed these questions via Regional Committees. Many comments and views were received. In general:

- There is reluctance to consider making boundaries match local NHS structures as these are relatively transient and under constant review.
- Concern was expressed about the problem of finding individuals who were prepared to take on Regional roles.
- There is a need to consider the governance arrangements since it is felt that, under current Council arrangements, Regional Representatives do not have an opportunity to significantly influence the policy and strategy of the Association.
- The Association should consider the establishment of a 'board' structure which could conduct the business of the Association, and free Members from time-consuming tasks to contribute to the Association in a more scientific, clinical or advisory role.
- Regions feel their activities e.g. scientific meetings and audit are well attended and are of high benefit to Members within and outwith each Region.

These views were discussed further at Council and more ideas were forthcoming:

- Regional Officers could write job descriptions so potential future candidates would understand the nature of the role.
- IT (e-mail) could be used more to send information directly to Members thereby bypassing, but not excluding, the slower Regional route.
- Regions should encourage and allow junior Members to participate more in Regional activities.

**Now is your chance to influence the debate.** Send your views to ACB News or via your Regional Committees and Representatives.

### **Regional Reports**

Further to the discussions above, the Regional Reports that are tabled at Council reveal extensive activity in the Regions, particularly successful scientific and audit meetings. The range of topics is diverse. Synacthen testing (Northern Ireland, Wales), analysis of CSF bilirubin (Republic of Ireland), malignancy (Scotland) and toxicology (Trent, Northern and Yorkshire) are a few examples. Even more encouraging is the very high quality of scientific work and presentations by junior Members in those Regions where prizes are awarded to trainees. More details are included in the Regional articles in the ACB Annual Report.

Virtually every Region expressed concern about inequalities / anomalies of AfC banding results - many thanks to FCS Executive and Representatives who are helping with appeals. There were several nominations from Regions for Association Awards. These were debated by Council elsewhere in the meeting and successful recipients will be proposed at the Association AGM (to be held at Focus 2006 - 6pm, Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2006, in the Clarence Suite, Brighton Hilton Metropole Hotel).

### **Success!**

It was with extreme pleasure that Janet Smith was able to announce that, on the 27<sup>th</sup> March, the ACB received notification from the Science Council that the Association can go forward as a licensed body for Chartered Scientist (CSci) status. A huge amount of work has been put in by many ACB Members to prepare the groundwork, the documentation and the submissions for this. Janet thanked, in particular, Dr Gwyn McCreanor and Dr Graham Groom. Further work will start in earnest after the AGM.

### **Pathology Review**

Even more hard work has been carried out by Association Members, led by Dr Ian Watson, in putting together a response to the Lord Carter of Coles Review panel. The response can be viewed on the ACB website.

### **Reports from Representatives of Other Bodies**

At every meeting Council receives reports from the Royal College of Pathologists (RCPATH - via Dr Trevor Gray) and the Association of Clinical Scientists (ACS - currently via Miss Janet Smith).

Dr Gray keeps Council up-to-date on RCPATH matters that are very close to the heart of ACB Members. Recent College Council Meetings have discussed, *inter alia*:

- Doctors in Society: Medical Professionalism in a changing world, see <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/pubs/books/books/docinsoc/docinsoc.pdf> and Modernising Medical Careers, see <http://www.mmc.nhs.uk/pages/specialities/specialityframework> both of which sites will be of particular interest to the ACB Medical Members.
- Clinical Scientists in Pathology: Bridging the Training Gap
- Conveying abnormal results to GPs out-of-hours
- Guidelines on the release of specimens and data to the police and other law enforcement agencies (a very important piece of work for all who work in all pathology disciplines)
- RCPATH examinations

### **Focus 2006**

Finally, does Council represent you and your views? Do you know the ACB Council Members? Would you like to meet and talk with them? Why not come to the ACB stand at Focus 2006 in Brighton where, if they are not immediately available, you can make contact with them via the ACB Office staff on the stand.

See you in Brighton.

Steve Goodall  
Assistant Secretary