



The Association for Clinical Biochemistry

PRESS RELEASE

18TH NOVEMBER 2010

Clinical Biochemists tackle blood letting

The Association for Clinical Biochemistry (ACB) is recommending to its members that they look closely at the amount of blood that is collected from patients for diagnostic tests to improve the quality and safety of the service to patients and potentially save £20 million a year across the NHS!.

They are suggesting to their members that they:

- Consider collecting smaller quantities of blood consistent with the requirements of the instrumentation in their laboratories.
- Liaise with colleagues in other departments to make sure that blood samples are shared whenever this is practical to reduce the number of tubes that need to be collected.
- Advise the doctors taking care of the patients on how they can avoid unnecessary tests and combine tests to ensure that samples are collected only when it is needed for patient safety and treatment.
- Make sure that their phlebotomy procedures have minimised the risk of cross infection.

This follows a hard hitting article in the ACB News November issue (downloadable at: <http://www.acb.org.uk/ACBNews/2010/November2010.pdf>) written by second year student doctor Jennifer Berg, studying at Sheffield University, following her experiences as a trainee phlebotomist. Jen found that:

- The amount of blood collected is often far greater than what is needed for the actual tests

- Patients believe too much blood is taken from them too often (and this seems to be true when the patterns of requesting tests is looked at)
- There are large financial and environmental costs for disposing of the extra blood, estimated at £10,000 pa in the hospital where the study took place.

Robert Hill, ACB Director of Scientific Affairs, speaking on behalf of the Association said yesterday “Jen’s article has been a wake-up call for us. In the past, analytical instruments required larger volumes of blood but now, with new methods and equipment, we are looking urgently at ways to reduce the amount of blood that we collect and waste and believe we will be able to reduce the discomfort and inconvenience to patients as well as making savings in environmental and financial terms by reducing the amount of blood that has to be disposed of in incinerators up and down the country. The savings could amount to several million pounds over the NHS as a whole.”

For further information, contact Dr. Robert Hill, Tel mobile: 07503 180622, office 0114 2713416. Jennifer Berg can be contacted through the University of Sheffield Press Office: Lauren Anderson, Media Relations Officer, Tel: 0114 222 1046, Email: l.h.anderson@sheffield.ac.uk

Clinical Biochemistry is the clinical science of examining blood and other fluids to diagnose and monitor disease and inform therapy.

The Association for Clinical Biochemistry (ACB), founded in 1953, is a professional body dedicated to the practice and promotion of clinical science and laboratory medicine and has medical and non-medical members in all major UK healthcare laboratories, many university departments and several commercial companies. It has a relationship with the clinical diagnostics industry through links with its Corporate Members. The Association liaises with, and is consulted by, many national and international organisations on issues relating to Clinical Biochemistry. It was instrumental in establishing accreditation for clinical scientists in all disciplines and administers accreditation in all disciplines through the Association of Clinical Scientists. It also plays a significant role in the training of Clinical Scientists in the Biochemistry discipline and its training framework is used by other disciplines.

Joe O’Meara, ACB Government Affairs Officer, 07730 681795, government.officer@acb.org.uk

A company limited by guarantee. Registered in England. Registration No. 863235
Registered Office: Association for Clinical Biochemistry, 130 – 132 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2TU
Website: <http://www.acb.org.uk>