

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Southern Region of the Association for Clinical Biochemistry held at 12:50 pm at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Queens Square on 27 March, 2012**

There were 44 members present

**1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Steve Frost, Fiona Riddoch, Andrew Taylor, Frances Boa, Sheila Flynn, Sarah Davie, Garry John, Rachel Carling and Maria Firth.

**2 Minutes of 2011 AGM**

These were agreed with the following correction and signed by the Chairman:

**Trainees Report:** The report incorrectly refers to state rather than to HPC registration.

**3 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**4 Report from the Chairman – Martyn Egerton**

Clinical Scientists need a good understanding of uncertainty in the work that we do in order that we can quantify the significance of changes in the tests we perform. Many in the profession may feel that 2011 has been marked by a high degree of uncertainty over many aspects of our working lives as organisations restructure and attempt to meet the tight financial pressures.

One certainty is that there has been some seriously good science going on within the Southern Region. There have been 4 scientific meetings on the themes of; ‘Laboratory Aspects of Neurology’, ‘Allergy Testing & Gastrointestinal Disease’, ‘Clinical Biochemistry and Cardiac Disease’ and ‘Sex, NETs (neuroendocrine tumours) and dynamic function tests’.

Reflecting the diversity of the membership of the Association, two of our meetings included sessions devoted to microbiology and immunology and it was exciting to see the cross fertilisation of ideas that the presentations brought.

As in previous years the two summer meetings were held outside London (conveniently near the sea) allowing a wider range of specialised interests to be covered.

Great credit goes to Angela Woods as meetings Secretary for maintaining the high standard of interesting and stimulating sessions.

Another certainty is the quality of presentations that are made at the annual members’ papers session. We were pleased this year to be able to award the winning presentation a prize in memory of Bill Richmond. Bill was an outstanding scientist who made a great contribution to science and this profession and it is good we are able to record his contribution in this prize.

The region has been able to offer two sponsorship awards enabling young scientists to visit other countries; one to assist in a teaching project and the other to visit a laboratory in India. We hope that such placements will continue.

Following the large demand for the ACB Management Training Course in 2010 it was agreed to hold another course in 2011 (normally it is biannual). The fully subscribed

course was held in Guildford and was a similar format to previous years. This year Sally Benton took over the running of the course and was successful in maintaining the high standard. The course is intentionally demanding for the participants but the feedback was that the course was a great success giving plenty of opportunity for participants to explore how management and financial processes work and to look at many other aspects of leadership and personnel management.

We were pleased that some of the Region's members were able to gather for a social evening in the summer. This consisted of a medically themed walk around part of central London and culminated in an enjoyable meal.

Uncertainty has been a good way to describe the progress of the programme of Modernising Scientific Careers. The preparation and start of the new training programme has taken great time and effort in the Region. We wait with interest to see how the training works out in practice through this first year. The trainees evening held in January was an excellent opportunity for the new intake to meet tutors and raise problems relating to their course. Such were their concerns that a further evening has been planned for later in the summer.

Just as some are embarking on the new training programme, others are coming to the end of their training and are looking for substantive posts. In the current climate there are fewer posts available and there is considerable uncertainty over whether those who complete their training will be able to continue in the profession. Not only is this a tragedy for the people concerned but it also a great concern for those who have invested effort in teaching and encouraging young scientists.

If aging is a certainty, then at the other end of the career scale there have been some notable retirements in the course of the year and we were pleased to mark the retirement of Dennis Wright and Bernie Rocks by presenting them with a small gift to acknowledge their work for the Southern Region of the Association.

#### **5. Appointment of officers**

The following nominations were received and accepted for the vacant positions:

Chair	Anne Tarn
Secretary	Helen Johnstone
Treasurer	Emma Connell
FCS Representative (London)	Oliver Clifford-Mobley
FCS Representative (Outside London)	Sally Brady
FCS Representative (Outside London)	Liz Groves

#### **6. Proposal to accept alterations to the Rules of the Southern Region**

These were circulated to members with the papers. An additional change was proposed by the Chair and seconded by the Secretary to change the number of FCS posts from "3" to "as necessary". This was to allow for sufficient representatives to deal with the increasing workload of the FCS within the region, resulting from reorganisation and mergers of laboratories. This proposal was agreed by the members.

### **7. Report from the Treasurer – Maria Firth**

At the last quarter ending in September 2011 there was a balance of £ 35,537.87. This included the ACB Office recharge of £ 1820.34 to cover all aspects of administration. Now I am standing down, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my friends past and present. It has been truly a privilege to serve the most friendly and caring committee over the years.

The Secretary noted that the region is no longer receiving capitation fees from the ACB and has to pay for committee expenses including services provided by the ACB Office. In addition there have been several requests recently for money towards attendance at meetings and placements abroad. As the only source of income is now from the scientific meetings, which do not always make a profit, the granting of bursaries may have to be restricted in future.

Ruth Lapworth reminded members that the C.P. Stewart offers grants to people wanting to gain experience in another laboratory, including laboratories abroad.

### **8. Report from the meetings secretary – Angela Woods**

Over the past year we have held 4 Scientific Meetings:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Organiser</b>	<b>Topic</b>
18 March 2011	RCPATH	Angela Woods	Clinical laboratory aspects of neurology
12 July 2011	Southend	Lesley Cranfield	Clinical Laboratory Aspects of Gastroenterology and Allergy
12 September 2011	Brighton	Stephen Frost	Clinical biochemistry in cardiac disease - Present and future. Included Bill Richmond Members Papers
25 November 2011	Charing Cross	Sarah Darch/ Rebecca Leyland	Sex, NETs and dynamic function tests

The Bill Richmond Members Papers prizes were awarded to:

Dr Sophie Barnes (Imperial College) – senior prize

Dr David Taylor (Kings College Hospital) – junior prize

All meetings have been well-attended and attracted good feedback from delegates. I would like to thank the local organisers and their assistants for their efforts in co-ordinating things.

Future meetings:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Organiser</b>	<b>Topic</b>
4 July 2012	Guildford	Andrew Taylor	Trace Elements (joint meeting with RSC)
Jan 2013	Royal Brompton, London	James Hooper	
Spring 2013	London	Jonathan Kay	To be confirmed

To avoid clashes with the many ACB Spotlight meetings this year, I have not planned an autumn meeting.

We are now looking for hosts for 2013 meetings.

Sponsorship can still be obtained, despite the economic downturn. We have had generous sponsorship from Genzyme, Phadia, and Abbott for meetings in 2011, and today of course from SAS Laboratories and Agilent.

## **9. Report from the FCS Representatives – Andrew Taylor**

Southern Region Representatives: Maria Firth, Stephen Frost, Andrew Taylor

The impact of the Government response to the financial crisis began to hit home for all areas of the NHS and pathology has not been immune to their effects. Increasing 'Carterisation' has seen several 'mergers and acquisitions' between Pathology services with the ever present threat of privatisation becoming reality in several parts of the region. This has led to several large re-organisations either having taken place or currently under discussion. The FCS has had to provide advice and support in several cases. TUPE transfers, maintenance of professional roles and standing and preservation of NHS terms and conditions being the main concerns of staff. In addition, pressures created by local cost improvement initiatives, and a sense of urgency is stimulating some employers to re-assess workforce requirements with implications in some Trusts upon our members. Further instances are anticipated in the coming year as the pressures on acute trusts in particular are increasing.

### **National Concerns and Consultations**

The NHS pay freeze continued with no cost of living increase for the majority of NHS staff however FCS continued to engage with the process and to submit data for incorporation into the national Staff side's submission to the NHS Pay Review Body. We remain active on the national NHS scene in participation at various consultation meetings with the Department of Health, both in our role in industrial relations (through negotiation meetings and sub-committees of the National Staff Council) and, together with the ACB officers, in more general forums about the place of our science in healthcare. FCS worked closely with the Directors of Education to drive best practice during the implementation of Modernised Scientific Careers.

Over the last year the big headline issue has been the proposal to change public sector pensions in order to make them more 'affordable'. The FCS supports the general staff-side position and whilst the organization has a 'no strike' rule. Advice was provided to members as to what they could be and should not be expected to do on the day of action on 30th November. Although the situation is still unresolved NHS employers have been directed to commence implementation of new rates of contribution as from 1st April 2012.

The FCS has prepared briefings for the membership on this matter and also on the issue of on-call which is now subject to local negotiation and is still unresolved in many Trusts. Another briefing, prepared by our case registrar and published recently in ACB News dealt with professional responsibilities and the need to avoid falling foul of the HPC, pointing out that we are deemed to be professionals even when 'off

duty' and the HPC codes of practice cover much more than just professional competency.

The 2012 Annual Meeting of the Region sees the retirement of Stephen Frost as one of the Regional representatives. Stephen has taken the lead in passing information to local representatives as well as being involved in individual member's cases and has served the Region well during his period of office.

## **10. Report from the Trainee's Committee Representatives – Emma Ashley**

Representatives:

- London (North Thames) – Jon Vernazza (Imperial)
- London (South Thames) – Helen Sawney (Epsom)
- Outside London – Emma Ashley (Royal Berkshire)

Jon Vernazza has been elected to vice chair for the Trainee's Committee; election for a new North Thames trainee is currently underway.

### **Pre-registration trainees**

There are 22 biochemists and 3 immunologists in London and 24 biochemists and 4 immunologists outside London on training contracts. 2011 was the first year of the Nottingham and Manchester MSc. Depending on base hospital location, STP (specialist training program) trainees were assigned to either course. Overall, the course appears to be running reasonably well. A few problems have been reported regarding returning of marks for coursework and exams, in addition to completing the online logbook and portfolio. 2011 trainees have recently taken their first exams, and are currently completing three-month rotations around departments, including Biochemistry, Immunology and Haematology.

The University of London MSc appears to be running smoothly with 8 trainees currently studying this course, and 4 are completing their final term on the University of Surrey MSc. This is the end of these MSc courses for NHS Clinical Biochemists. In 2011, 15 trainees passed their MScs. Third and fourth year trainees are continuing training at their base hospitals, including completing paediatric, district general and teaching hospital secondments. All the 2008 trainees have had their end of year training appraisals and have gained their certificates of completion. There are 3 toxicology trainees, who take an MSc in Analytical Toxicology based at Queen Mary College (UoL).

### **Jobs**

Pre-registration trainees in their final year are currently attending interviews for posts that have been advertised, many of which are fixed-term contracts. Again, many are coming to the end of their training with no secured substantive post. Furthermore, some band 7 posts are being advertised where state registration is compulsory. As of yet, in the south-central region no trainees have secured employment going forward. Some of the London trainees have secured fixed-term contracts for the coming year. Many trainees who have completed their formal training remain on fixed term contracts, or remain unemployed/employed outside of the profession. As mentioned in 2011, this is a continuing significant concern.

### **HPC registration and FRCPATH**

There were several successful applications for HPC Registration, and a number of trainees passed the latest FRCPATH PtI and FRCPATH PtII exams, with more planning to sit both parts of the exams in Spring 2012. Overall, issues that were raised concerning registration last year have been largely overcome. Going forward, it is

hoped that there will be no or little delay in processing of HPC registration submission.

### **Meetings/conferences**

The ACB trainees welcome meeting took place on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2012, where the 2011 intake of trainees were invited to talk with Frances Boa and discuss their training experiences so far. Many issues were raised regarding the new format, including variations in training between hospitals and the criteria that need to be fulfilled on each rotation around different Pathology departments. As a result, another meeting has been organised in June to allow trainees to meet with their regional tutors to discuss how well training has gone this year.

Training course no. 5 held in Liverpool was well attended by trainees in this region. It was an organised and informative course, with trainees benefiting greatly from the experience. Many trainees will be attending training course no. 6 in Nottingham in April. ACB meetings are being well attended by trainees, including the ACB spotlight meetings due to the offers/ discounts available. Trainees also attended the London/KSS School of Pathology conference on February 10<sup>th</sup>, the recent South Thames Audit group meeting on Porphyrins and the Value of Pathology Event in November 2011. Many trainees will be attending Focus this year to present posters and attend the training day.

The FRCPath tutorials are currently being set-up for trainees outside London with a plan to hold one once a month. A new round of tutorials are being organised for London trainees that should hopefully commence in the autumn. Callum Livingstone continues to organise regular FRCPath training days.

### **Other**

As it is National Pathology Year, several events are in the planning stages. Trainees in the region continue to be active in bringing awareness to the profession (career talks, secondary school science events, laboratory tours). Several events took place for Healthcare Science Week (12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> March) with good representation by the trainees of the region. The trainees' website is in the process of being updated and is about to go live.

It has been reported that it is likely fewer trainees will be recruited into the STP scheme next year due to workforce planning issues. Vacancies will be advertised in the next few weeks in the New Scientist and recruitment will take place via an online application tool.

## **11. Reports from tutors**

### **London and East Region Regional tutor's report- presented by Sally Benton**

In August 2011, Sarah Davie took over as regional tutor from Frances Boa (London South) and Rachel Carling took over as regional tutor from Stephen Whiting (London North East). We would like to thank Frances and Stephen for all their hard work in recent years.

#### **Annual reviews**

All London trainees have received their annual appraisals this year and are progressing well with their training. All students who sat their MSc Clinical Biochemistry examination this year were successful, all gaining either merits or distinctions. One trainee in London left the training scheme at the end of the second year. One toxicology trainee left at the end of the second year.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> year funding**

There is no formal funding from NHS London for the 4<sup>th</sup> year, but they did agree to 2 months extra funding for three trainees last year.

#### **Completion of Training**

Certificates of completion of training have been awarded to Claire Glicksman, Ian Hutton, Samantha King, Rebecca Leyland, Nicholas Martin, Helen Sawney, Christina Somorani, Sasala Wickramasinghe and Ralph Wigley. One third year trainee chose to leave the profession for a career in medicine and with the exception of one trainee, all others have been successful in finding posts, although many of these are fixed term contracts.

#### **Modernising Scientific Careers**

With the implementation of Modernising Scientific Careers in 2011, the existing Clinical Biochemistry training scheme was superseded by the Life Sciences Scientist Training Programme (STP). The marketing and recruitment process to fill these training posts was nationally co-ordinated by NHS West Midlands on behalf of DoH. Competition for places was intense and the standard of applicants was extremely high. London appointed 7 new Life Sciences STP trainees who will specialise in Clinical Biochemistry. The new recruits commenced in September 2011 and are registered for the MSc with Manchester University. The Clinical Biochemistry STP learning guide is still in the process of being completed.

#### **New appointments (MSC)**

Recruitment is currently under way for Life Sciences STP trainees and is again being nationally coordinated. Short listing should be completed by 22<sup>nd</sup> March and interviews will be held in May. London is recruiting for 4 posts.

#### **Report from SE Coast Tutor - Stephen Halloran**

The number of trainees recruited in South East Coast has decreased from 6 to 3 as departments are unable to cope with the amount of local training required under MSC.

#### **Report from East of England Tutor -Pauline Ridgwell**

Three trainees have completed their training, one trainee has gained HPC registration and two trainees are to be recruited this year, as usual.

The demise was noted of both the Guildford and the London MSc courses as a result of centralisation of the MSc courses this year. The courses have been running for many years and many SR members have lectured on the courses.

Gill Rumsby complained that the Civil Service style essay writing aptitude tests appeared to have ruled out some potentially very good candidates during the recruitment process this year. This was seconded by Stephen Halloran who noted that the essays could not be written on-line due to a time limitation. Mike Thomas suggested that problems were fed back to the National School and to Frances Boa, the Education Director.

### **12. Report from the Workforce Advisors - presented by Sally Brady**

The lack of posts for trainees leaving their fixed-term posts was reiterated and the need for new posts (even temporary posts) in the Southern Region.

**13. Report from the Microbiology Representative – Derren Ready** (received after the meeting)

We have 89 members in the Southern region. It has been 18 months since the Clinical Microbiologists joined the ACB.

Members of the Microbiology Professional Committee (MPC) have representatives, contributing to ACB Council, Education, Trainees, Workforce Advisory, Publications, Website, National Meetings and Federation of Clinical Scientists committees.

We have a new Microbiology Group identifier, based on the ACB logo.

The MPC gave its endorsement to a new joint National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence (NICE) and HPA guide for the prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections and scientific advice was also provided to the Department of Health through a consultation on management of hazard group 4 haemorrhagic fevers.

**Training & Modernising Scientific Careers (MSC)**

Six microbiologists commenced the new MSC Scientist Training Programme (STP) in 2011, in the Southern region

Annual appraisals for trainees are currently being introduced and sites offering training will undergo assessment and ratification.

A highly successful training day for pre-registration Clinical Scientists and Higher Specialist Trainees was held in March.

**Scientific Meetings**

Microbiology has been represented at some of the 2011 Southern meetings. The microbiologists participated in the ACB Spotlight series of meetings with a very well-attended programme on Near Patient Testing held in the new Royal College of Pathologists.

**14. Social event - Sally Brady**

A scientifically themed walk, followed by a meal in a pub took place over the summer. A questionnaire will be e-mailed to members in the summer regarding ideas for future events.

**15. Report from the Southern Region webmaster**

No report received. The Secretary noted that there had been problems in updating the meetings section. Changes to the regional website await the new ACB website, which has been delayed.

Ruth Lapworth announced that the new ACB website had been delayed by the need for information to be uploaded and that it should be available by Focus.

**16. AOB**

There was no other business.

## **17. Presentation of Southern Region retirement awards**

Rewards were presented at the AGM to Pauline Ridgwell and to Lesley Cranfield for their services to and within the Southern Region. The award to John Honour was to be made at the end of the day.

The meeting closed at 13:35