

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Southern Region of the Association for Clinical Biochemistry held at 13:00pm at the Royal College of Pathologists, London on 28 April, 2013

There were 44 members present

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mike Thomas, Paul Eldridge, Pat Twomey, David Gaze and Shelia Flynn.

2 Minutes of 2012 AGM

Recirculate minutes after meeting unable to recall whether this has been circulated previously.

3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4 Report from the Chair – Ann Tarn

For members of the Southern Region, as elsewhere, one of the main focuses for 2012 has been on service reorganisation with many spending significant time in meetings discussing this whilst at the same time trying to continue to improve and increase efficiency in our local organisations. At the moment within the region there are a variety of proposed models, in various stages of development. These range from one relatively small hospital remaining ‘as is’ through managed networks, some in partnership with private providers right through to the direct access work being put out to tender. We recognise the importance of ACB representation in this work although the amount of information available and the involvement and influence of ACB members is somewhat variable.

Despite this, our members remain enthusiastic about our profession and this is demonstrated by the excellent regional scientific meetings where the standard of presentations, especially of the member’s cases is exceptional. The topics have been diverse and meetings have been well attended.

- The March meeting was held to celebrate the work of John Honour under the title of “From Humans to Steroids and back”.
- The summer (!) meeting on “Clinical, Environmental and Nutritional Investigations of Trace Elements and Human Health” was a joint meeting with the RSC Atomic Spectroscopy Group.
- The recent autumn meeting included members paper’s and case presentations (congratulations to Dr Olivia Bacon and Ms Pandina Kwong who received the 1st and 2nd prizes of the Bill Richmond members papers award) with the afternoon being a mixture of science and presentations on changes in the healthcare science professions and on Pathology re-organisation in London.

A huge thank you to Angela Woods who has now retired from the post of Meetings Secretary after a number of years and who has consistently organised stimulating and well run meetings.

The SR made retirement awards to Lesley Cranfield, and Pauline Ridgwell at the AGM in recognition of services to the Region and John Honour was nominated for a regional and ACB Honorary member award at the regional March meeting and at the ACB Council meeting in July respectively. A number of prominent senior members have retired from the profession during the course of 2012 and these members will also be put forward for ACB awards. Whilst on the theme of awards the Committee were delighted to hear that southern region member Ruth Lapworth was awarded an MBE for services to healthcare in the Queen’s Birthday honours.

There have been a number of changes in the Southern Region committee with new Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Meetings Secretary over the last year and we hope that the ACB Southern region will continue to be relevant to its members in these challenging times.

5 Appointment of Officers

Rebecca Leyland was formally appointed to the Meetings secretary position having replaced Angela Woods midway through 2012 and Hannah Fox was appointed as the Southern Region Immunology representative. The southern region welcomes new appointments and there are several vacancies which have not been filled so please be in touch if you would like the opportunity to represent the profession.

6 Report from the Treasurer

During the 2012 calendar year, the regional accounts show a small increase in final balance of £35,343.88 (up from £34,368.96 in January 2012). We held several regional meetings, receiving £2,166.67 to date in sponsorship and £4,311.64 in registration fees. We now longer receive funding from ACB membership fees and therefore are charged for use of the ACB office meeting room facilities (£600 in total for 2012).

Several travel bursaries were awarded to members for attendance and poster presentations at FOCUS 2012, totalling £1233.96. Applications will be considered for conference attendance, provided local Trust routes of funding and any individual training budgets have been exhausted, and the applicant is presenting at the conference (either oral or poster presentation). Depending on available funds, we may have to impose a maximum value per application, and would normally not consider requests from members who have already successfully applied in the last few years. It is worth highlighting that the ACB C.P. Stewart fund also offers travel grants for members to gain experience in a particular technique in another laboratory (UK or abroad).

There was one question from the membership about funding for electives. As the electives are part of the STP education programme, which has centrally arranged funding, the Southern Region Committee will decline any requests from trainees seeking funding for electives.

7 Report from the Meetings Secretary

The Southern Region has had some very successful meetings during 2012/2013 especially since FRCPath training days and nationally organised meetings have made regional meetings more difficult to organise. The ACB National Committee has suggested coordinated meetings as regions are duplicating topics.

The members' papers are always very good and it has been asked by the Committee if there are sufficient members papers to merit a full day?

Without sponsorship, regionally funded meetings would be an unlikely event. This past year the Southern Region must thank (in no particular order) Agilent, Analytic Sciences, QMX labs, Beckmann and Genzyme for their continued support towards the Southern region Meetings.

We are constantly looking for new locations to hold meetings and for suggested speakers and topics. We welcome suggestions from members and for any offers to organise regional meetings at your base hospitals.

8 Report from the FCS Representatives

National negotiation

Since the announcement of the 'Heads of agreement' for the new pension scheme last year, things have gone quiet on this front. However further increases to employee contributions were imposed this year, about which there was an FCS email briefing sent out to all members in March (information should also have been attached to your payslip). One more year of contribution increases is planned for next year, but this should not be as large. The new pension scheme in its entirety is planned to start in 2015.

The big issue of late has been changes to AfC T&Cs. This had become a priority because of threats from some Trusts (particularly in the south west) to impose local changes to AfC. In response to this there were negotiations at a national level to determine some areas where Unions could agree to changes. This culminated in the set of changes that came into effect on 1st April 2013, and have been described in detail in an FCS briefing email dated 26th February sent out to all members. Several of the changes to AfC are subject to local implementation, and as such will go through Trust's having an accredited FCS representative to participate in local negotiations. Our membership is mainly senior staff, and experience has shown that other unions may not stick up for our interests. This is particularly an issue for the new 'annually earned' pay points at the tops of bands 8c, 8d and 9. Members are encouraged to make sure their Trust has a local representative. There was a 1% uplift to salaries (and cost of living allowances) this year. In the Budget it was announced that uplifts will be limited to 1% for the next 2 years.

Reorganisation/reconfiguration and representing members

In common with last year, the progress of 'Carterisation' of many labs continues. The FCS has been providing advice and support to individuals affected by reorganisation. Sadly wholesale privatisation of services is also now happening in the region. It is important that members who transfer out of the NHS into private companies defend the profession in the new potentially hostile environment. FCS representation is important in these situations. In addition the East of England primary care tender has now concluded. This is expected to result in further reconfiguration of services in the region, which will affect members. There are also cases arising from potential redundancies brought about by Trust 'cost improvement plans', often under the disingenuous banner of QIPP. Members are encouraged to feed information up to the SR committee about any potential reorganisation/restructuring.

9 Report from Trainee's Committee Representatives

There are a considerable number of trainees currently at risk in temporary positions that are due to end in the autumn and with the 2010 intake, also due to end in August there seems to be a shortage of jobs to apply for. There is the possibility of HSST positions being available, but we are unsure of the numbers and timings.

The SR welcome evening was held in December 2012 to welcome the new intake of trainees. This was a successful evening, but there was poor attendance from supervisors.

The first of the new format training courses was held in November 2012 at Warwick University. This was very successful and well attended, although the cost was thought a little high. This has been reduced for the next meeting. A large number of trainees presented during the members papers session at the SR Autumn meeting. Unfortunately both of the recent ACB SR meetings were poorly attended. Trainees have been attending the Spotlight meetings and found the paediatric Liver & Paediatric Biochemistry ACB Spotlight Meeting in December particularly useful.

There are concerns over the Nottingham MSc being discontinued for STP trainees in biochemistry, although they are continuing to offer programs in the other specialities (e.g. Genetics, Infection Control, etc.). Trainees are concerned about the impact this will have on completing the degree, HCPC registration, equivalency, and future employment prospects, as well as the parity they will have with the Manchester graduates.

The FRCPATH tutorials are continuing to be run once a month, with many trainees looking to sit the exam in March. The trainees' website is still in the process of being updated.

The NICE clinical guideline summaries will be published on the current ACB website.

2011 intake nervous and don't have clear communication on how they are going to register. Trainees intending to register via the 6 year route should contact FCS representatives.

10 Report from Tutors

There has been limited success for trainees finding permanent posts while some are gaining fixed term appointments but demand for posts is still greater than the number of posts available. There are also concerns that some band 7 posts are being restricted to state registered applicants. This can leave those at the end of their training period who are waiting for state registration in an employment vacuum.

This year saw the second instalment of modernising scientific careers scientist training programme (STP) trainees in biochemistry. London was awarded 4 STP trainees (Barts, George's, UCLH and Kings), 1 South East STP (Guildford) and 2 East of England STPs (Southend and Luton and Dunstable). The first year of STPs are progressing well and attending annual appraisals in line with current Grade A trainees. In addition the southern region has agreed to fund a year 1 STP review meeting to raise any training issues with either the portfolio or the MSc course itself. The success of the programme is yet to be recognised and the number of Biochemistry STP places within the southern region for 2013 is expected to be more than that awarded in 2012.

11 Report from Workforce Advisors

There continues to be a lack of jobs for trainees leaving training. Some temporary posts are available but substantive posts are required if we are to keep trainees in the profession. There are many changes occurring in the Southern Region including joint ventures, privatisation, networks and 'carterisation'. Hopefully this will produce some new jobs.

12 Report from the Microbiology Representative

No report received from the microbiology representative. Attendance at committee meetings has been intermittent and this will be reviewed in light of the rules of the Southern Region of the Association for Clinical Biochemistry.

13 Report from the Immunology Representative

Not currently represented at the Southern Region Committee Meeting

14 Social Events

The Southern region is the largest region in UK and we have a mixed population. It has been easier to have social events after meetings rather than organising additional social events throughout the year.

15 Report from the Southern Region Webmaster

Concerns remain about updating the regional section of the ACB website which has been echoed by other regions. This has been further discussed at council.

16 AOB

None

Meeting closed 13:19.