Chairmans Report

General View

Its been a challenging period for the Association and its members in the West Midlands. The proposed tender of GP pathology provision (details from the team running the project at http://www.strategicprojectsseo.co.uk/index.php?id_sec=210) obviously has the potential to affect the working lives of many of its members. The ACB West midlands has engaged with the project team and tried to influence the clinical specification of the tender. We are still waiting for the outcome of this and it remains to be seen if we have any impact on its influence.

Name Change of the Association

After an overwhelming vote at our AGM the association has now officially changed its name to ‘THE ASSOCIATION FOR CLINICAL BIOCHEMISTRY AND LABORATORY MEDICINE.’ The reasoning behind this is to widen the scope of the association to include all disciplines and reflect the increasingly blurred lines amongst traditional specialities as we move to newer modes of working for example “Blood Sciences”.

The ACB’s response to the Francis report

Full details can be found at http://www.acb.org.uk/docs/ACB%20view%20on%20Government’s%20response%20to%20the%20Francis%20report.pdf

Minimum retest intervals published

A final report detailing consensus recommendations for minimum re-testing intervals for use in Clinical Biochemistry has been published at http://www.acb.org.uk/CPS/CPSNews.asp

ACB Council Report

There has been much talk and debate regarding the National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS) and a presentation was received by Val Davidson on this topic. The NSHCS has been working very closely with the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) on ensuring a route to registration for STP trainees and providing an equivalence route. Themed Boards for each area of training are now established and have started meeting. Fancies Boa and David Vallance have been representing the ACB. The boards have been monitoring both the on-site and laboratory based learning. A strong concern of the boards has been the lack of time allocated by Trusts for the workplace rotations.

The New president is Eric Kilpatrick and you can follow him on Twitter @ACBPresident.

Jonathan Berg has informed Executive of his intention to stand down as ACB News editor after 24 years. The West Midlands committee would like to thank Jonathan for his tireless work in this area.

New Regional Committee Appointments
A number of committee members have had to remit office since our last meeting. I’d like to thanks James, Matt and Angela for contributing to the region and the Association. We have had the following proposals for replacements:

1. Jenna Waldron - Secretary
2. Alex Lawson - Treasurer
3. Andrew Hartland - Vice Chair

Dr David Kennedy will be taking up the role of regional FCS rep and my thanks to David Andrews for his work in this area.

As this is my last meeting I would like to wish Clare all the very best for her term as chair.
West Midlands ACB
Meeting Secretary Report 2012-2013 AGM
Kamaljit Chatha

General information

A conference call was arranged between all meeting secretaries and the ACB head office. It was decided that there were too many meeting occurring that we clashing with each other and causing low numbers of delegates registering. The conclusion was that a minimum of one scientific meeting should be held per financial year per region, current regulations state a minimum of three. We also must share the dates we are arranging meetings with other regions to ensure that the dates do not clash.

Since we have moved away from the science park we do not have a consistent location for holding the meetings and the venues in Birmingham can be costly.

ACB head office have organised the AGM with a one day audit meeting, without contacting the regional committee. I will ask that they communicate any regional events with us.

Meeting June 2012

This meeting had to be cancelled due to low number of delegates who registered for the meeting, which made it a cost prohibitive meeting. A room had been booked which cost £500, which had to be paid. Therefore, we made a loss at that meeting. It was found that there was a spotlight meeting the previous week, which covered the same topic – Mass Spectrometry, which may explain the low interest in the meeting.

Meeting November 2012

This meeting was held for Mike Hallworth and his contribution to the profession. This meeting was successful, we attracted a good number of delegates ($n=47$), and we made a profit of £588.81 for this meeting. We received sponsorship of £300 including VAT for this meeting.

The feedback for this meeting can be seen in the following chart (17 responses), which shows that overall the meeting was good.
Meeting May 2013

This meeting has been organised for Dr Penny Clark who has retired. The meeting had to be moved as the selected date was during a week when an endocrinology conference was being held; unfortunately this meant that most of the speakers would have unable to attend. This meeting has been organised with Kirsty Gordon. We have registered 25 delegates for this meeting, which could be better. This meeting has received sponsorship of £200 including VAT from Roche Diagnostics. Due to the low numbers we will be making a loss at this meeting.

Meeting June 2013

This meeting was cancelled at the last Committee meeting, mostly because there were a lot of other meetings at the same time but also because it was too close to the previous meeting.

Meeting November 2013

The meeting date, venue and content are yet to be decided.
Regional Audit Report for 2012 - 2013

The Regional Audit Group has met on 3 occasions this year with on average 7 attendees with representatives from 8 hospitals. We send the meeting minutes to all the Clinical Chemistry Heads of Departments in the region and Birmingham Quality to try to keep all informed and encourage participation.

Regional Audit

Update on previous audits:

Myeloma and plasma cell disorders audit – Naomi Rankin – undertaken 2011-12 year. The outcomes of this audit were presented at the National Audit meeting in Birmingham in June 2012. The presentation and final report were distributed to labs throughout the West Midlands along with recommendations and a response sheet.

Neonatal Jaundice – completed this winter 2011/12, presented at the last AGM(March 12) but the final report is still pending.

Current audits for 2012 – 13:

During 2011 – 2012 we have undertaken a regional audit of ‘Hypertension in Pregnancy – (NICE guidelines CG107) – Assessment of proteinuria in hypertensive disorders of pregnancy’. Questionnaire responses have now been received and a report will be produced in the next few months with recommendations.

In December 2012 we distributed a questionnaire to audit the ‘Biochemical investigation of anaphylaxis/? Anaphylaxis’ picking up on the NICE guidelines of Dec 11. We have received a limited response. Data yet to be evaluated and report to be written.

Future audits:

- BNP Services for GPs – in early discussion/questionnaire draft stage
- HbA1c in Dx of DM - in early discussion/questionnaire draft stage

Participants of the audit meetings have worked hard at preparing audit questionnaires, assessing data and writing reports and time limitations are making the task very challenging – so thanks to go to all of them. If laboratories have under a local audit that they feel would be of interest to other labs and can be undertaken as a regional audit please let me know.

National Audit

The National Clinical Biochemistry Audit Group met twice this year in the ACB Office in Tooley Street in September 2012 and March 2013.
The National Audit meeting was held on 20\textsuperscript{th} June 2012 at Austin Court, Birmingham – based around tumour markers and oncology in one session and demand management in another, with presentations of national and regional audits and an opportunity for presentation of local audits. This meeting was well attended and two Scientists from the west Midlands presented at the meeting.

In collaboration with the RCPath audit templates have been prepared to assist in College revalidations but that can be utilise by anyone.

A national audit on turnaround times and an audit of eGFR were undertaken and were/were scheduled to be presented at Focus 13

Proposed audits for 2013 – 14 include hsTroponin and Vitamin D.

May 2013
Treasurer’s report

Starting balance as of 26/10/2012: £13,943.65

WM Diabetes Specialist Interest Group Meeting – 15th Oct 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>-25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>-80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-£105.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WM Regional Meeting – 7th Nov 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delegate Fees</td>
<td>1385.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship</td>
<td>300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Expenses</td>
<td>-132.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>-21.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue/Catering</td>
<td>-890.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement gifts</td>
<td>-52.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£588.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Post sent from ACB office for 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ads &amp; Mailing</td>
<td>-4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-£4.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wolverhampton Meetings 26th Oct 2012 and 5th Feb 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>-55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>-60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-£115.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Closing balance as of 19/03/2013: £14,307.78

Expense claims erroneously attributed to WM region total £428.90, hence current balance according to ACB statements is £13,878.88

Matthew Whitlock

ACB WM Treasurer

May 2013
Trainees Representative Report

Status of current trainees

2012 Intake – Of the two STP trainees that started in September, both have unfortunately left their posts: Faye Wheeler (City Hospital) has left the profession and Olivia Heenan (HEFT) has left to continue her training in another region.

2011 Intake – Three STP trainees are continuing with the new MSC scheme: Amy Frank (UHCW), Jacqueline Folkes (UHNS) and Sukhbir Kaur (City Hospital). They are on the University of Manchester Blood Sciences MSc course and are progressing well.

2010 Intake – Laura Bernstone, Laura Rogers, Chris Duff and Alex Lawson have now completed their MSc degrees. Since September they have been on placements at Regional Toxicology (City Hospital) and Birmingham Children’s Hospital. They will be assessed for ACB Certificate of Completion in autumn 2013. Alex Lawson has recently secured a permanent position at HEFT.

2009 Intake – Pamela Sturges (HEFT) and Simon Whitehead (New Cross) are in the final year of their training contract. James Hawley has just been appointed to a permanent position in the North West region (Wythenshawe).

2008 Intake – Kirsty Hedges (City Hospital) has had her training contract extended (until Sept 2013). Chris Gay has moved from his extended training post in Shrewsbury for a fixed-term position at UHNS. Naomi Rankin has left the profession at the end of her training contract to take up an academic research post in Glasgow. Lucy Darwin has also left the profession and is now studying for a degree in medicine. Malcolm McTaggart (HCPC registered) has moved from the South East region to start at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

Overview

- 11 pre-registration trainees (including 3 STPs).
- 29 registered trainees.

These numbers do not include Microbiology and Immunology trainees. I have had contact from some of these trainees but as they are fewer in number compared
Biochemistry trainees they tend to be represented on a national level at the ACB trainees committee meeting.

**Achievements and activities**

The following is a brief summary of recent achievements and activities. Apologies to those trainees not mentioned who may have had achievements that I am unaware of.

**Meetings/Conferences**

- In general, there were fewer attendees from the West Midlands at the last ACB Training Course compared to previous years.
- A large number of trainees presented posters at Focus in York (April 2013). Chris Duff was shortlisted for the ACB medal award (oral presentation).
- Mike Cornes and Chris Duff sit on EFLM working groups (Pre-analytical Phase and Cardiac Markers). Both attended meetings in Dubrovnik (Oct 2012). The next such meetings are scheduled for May 2013 in Milan.
- Jenna Waldron did a presentation at an ACB/RCPath Spotlight meeting in October.
- Alex Lawson and James Hawley attended the annual Mass Spectrometry: Applications to the Clinical Lab (MSACL) meeting in San Diego. Each received travel awards by the conference organisers and their commercial sponsors.

**Publications**

Since my last report Jenna Waldron, with Mike Cornes as a co-author, has published a paper in the *Journal of Clinical Pathology* entitled Vitamin D: A negative acute phase reactant. Simon Whitehead has published a paper in the *Annals of Clinical Biochemistry* entitled Between-assay variability of faecal calprotectin enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay kits.

Jane Birtwistle (Immunology) has had a paper published in the *Journal of Immunological Methods* entitled Development of a highly-sensitive multi-plex assay using monoclonal antibodies for the simultaneous measurement of kappa and lambda immunoglobulin free light chains in serum and urine.
FRCPath

- A number of trainees took the exam in March 2013 and are awaiting results.

HPCP

- Chris Gay passed the ACS assessment in December and is HCPC registered.
- Kirsty Hedges passed the ACS assessment in March and is now HCPC registered.
Regional Tutor’s Report

2012 Recruitment
The following STP trainees started on the MSC training scheme during September 2012:

BHH  CWebster  Olivia Heenan
SWBH  J Berg  Faye Wheeler

Olivia has since transferred to Bristol for personal reasons.

MSc Course
MSc vivas will be held on 10th July at the University of Birmingham

MSC Course
The Nottingham course has been disbanded. All current trainees are now registered on the Manchester program.

Interviews for 2013 intake were held in Birmingham on April 25th. I haven’t been given the names of the successful candidates who will be coming to the West Midlands.

Exam successes
Jenna Waldron  Part 2 Module 1  Spring 2012
Matt Whitlock  Part 2 Module 1  Spring 2012
Kamaljit Chatha  Part 2 Module 1  Spring 2012
Rachel Henderson  Part 2 Module 1  Autumn 2012

Annual assessments
Please can you remind your trainees that annual assessments will be held in October.
Annual Report to ACB West Midlands AGM (2012-13)

ACB Workforce Advisor Report. Dr DT Vallance

Adrian Miller (AM) has now taken over from John Kane (JK) as the Chair of the Workforce Advisory Committee. The Committee now meets once per year in January in a joint meeting with the Education Committee. A second, virtual meeting is held in the summer/early autumn.

Workforce statistics

- AM has continued to collect workforce statistics as JK had done previously. Some concern was expressed over the different job titles in the ACB database. It was suggested that members should be asked to choose from a set number of standard job titles to make data collection and interpretation easier.

- The age and gender distribution of clinical scientists in biochemistry, immunology and microbiology remains similar to before. The older age range is dominated by males with the younger age group mostly female. Please email d.vallance@nhs.net for a full copy of the report.

Centre for Workforce Intelligence

- The CfWI has been overwhelmed by its task of collecting workforce data for the entire NHS. The ACB has submitted workforce data on Biochemistry, Immunology and Microbiology. However very few other organisations collect or hold such high quality data.

- The 2012 CfWI report into workforce statistics was delayed for 6 months. The report admitted that its own statistics and data were not accurate and no plans or recommendations on recruitment were made in the report (because the statistics were unreliable).

Trainee numbers

- There is significant concern in the profession that whilst senior posts are being lost, an unsustainable number of trainees are being recruited with trainees leaving part way through their training if other job opportunities arise.

- The ACB no longer has a direct role in requesting trainee posts. This is now carried out by the Local Education Training Boards (LETB) who decide on trainee numbers although some Regional Tutors have been able to limit numbers recruited. The LETB insist on local workforce planning. However their data is very limited and not as comprehensive as that held by the ACB.

Survey of lost and vacant posts.

- This was last carried out in 2010/11.
- The current 2013 survey shows that, whilst there is still a net loss of posts, the severity has lessened compared with previous surveys (net loss in current survey of 10 posts, net loss in 2010 of 48 posts).
- The data also show a change in the factors influencing changes to the workforce; in 2010 financial constraints was the predominant cause of posts being lost. In the current survey, rebanding and internal re-structuring dominate, probably reflecting attempts to maintain posts at lower pay bands rather than lose posts and the drive to consolidate laboratory medicine into “Blood Science” departments.
- Please email d.vallance@nhs.net for a full copy of the survey.
Activities During the Year

National Pathology Year saw a large number of public events across the UK and in all the ACB Regions. It remains to be seen if the degree of public engagement will reduce now that the College is no longer holding “National Pathology Weeks”. Engagement with the public is very important as a means of raising the profile of our profession and Laboratory Medicine in general and I hope the West Midlands will continue its high level of activity in this arena. The increasing involvement of patients in their healthcare and moves towards providing direct access to results emphasises the need to build relationships and communications with them.

The other major stream of activity in the last year has been to take forward the Pathology Champions programme I mentioned in last year’s update. A very successful workshop hosted by the ACB in the autumn of 2012 attracted top level support from the College, IBMS and BIVDA. Unfortunately the broadly based momentum has been attenuated by moves to reincarnate a “Pathology Alliance” with the other organisations holding back until that Umbrella can be re-established. The ACB is keeping the ball rolling but we recognise that our influence would be factorially increased with a broader base.

On a strong positive note, a workshop in which representatives of the champions reviewed the service specifications from the “Pathology Toolkit” developed a commentary identifying point by point issues, areas needing clarification and occasional inaccuracies or inconsistencies. This was intended primarily as an aid to professionals responding to the specifications but has also been communicated to the NHS team developing the specifications where it received a warm welcome. It is hoped that this will lead us to a dialogue in which we can put forward our views and concerns.

Labs Are Vital™ (LRV)

The Champions programme was conceived and launched under the UK LRV banner. The moves towards a Pathology Alliance have somewhat overtaken this and the whole basis of LRV globally has changed. Abbott have handed the initiative over to the professions, though remain as a strong supporter and contributor, with the intention of making the initiative more acceptable to the industry as a whole rather than being perceived as a tool of a single company. This is a positive move but it is still a little unclear how the more local (ie national)
bodies will interact with it. The initiative is temporarily stalled in the UK while this is sorted out!

**Strategy for the coming year**

The report from the past year may sound less than dynamic but given the challenges presented to the Health Service, and Laboratory Medicine in particular in England, we need to press forward and adopt a positive attitude. The ACB will continue to press forward with the Champions initiative with a view to combining and consolidating efforts at influencing the developing infrastructure to maintain the quality of services and the safety of patients.

- **External Communications and Influence**
  Our activities with Champions aim to assemble evidence of good practice and potential resolutions for areas of concern that will equip them with the ammunition needed to put forward our points of view. The commissioning structures are becoming clearer and opening up channels of communication. It will be important for Regional champions to engage with key individuals (notably local Scientific Officers) and commissioning groups on a personal level. I am hoping that each Region will promote a support work for its identified champion(s) including individual members with the enthusiasm and willingness to engage with commissioners.

  This relies to some extent on the willingness and openness of those commissioners but we will need to take the initiative and be prepared to deal with rebuff as well as open doors!

- **Quality Improvement Performance, Productivity, Safety**
  Demonstrating what we are doing to measure and improve quality and patient safety while maintaining and improving cost effectiveness and productivity is an effective means of showing the value of Clinical Science and Laboratory Medicine. We need to gather and share examples from our day to day work.

- **Networking and Communications training**
  Where there is a need and the enthusiasm, training sessions can be arranged to help equip our champions for the process of engaging with target audiences.

**Public Engagement**

Though there will be no “Pathology Week” with which we can identify activities I hope that individuals and laboratories will continue to promote events to take our professional work
into the public arena. Equally important are events that take our work to other healthcare professionals and managers.

The launch of the “Labtestsonline UK” Smartphone app on 10th June provides an opportunity to follow up with patients and GP Practices alike.

The STEM Ambassador programme offers many opportunities for professionals in scientific disciplines to work with schools both to help and encourage school students in scientific subjects and to provide information and encouragement about careers in healthcare sciences. Such work also raises our profile with the teachers and parents which makes these activities doubly relevant.

I will be happy to continue to work with the West Midlands promoting laboratory medicine group to help take these things forward.

Joe O’Meara
Government affairs Officer
government.officer@acb.org.uk