

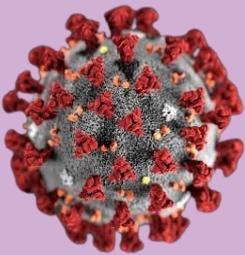


**FACULTY OF
PATHOLOGY**

ROYAL COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Working to ensure the highest standards in laboratory medicine



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Message from The Dean



When we last met at our Annual Symposium, Feb 6th and 7th 2020, no one could have envisaged the extent of the challenges that we were about to face,

not only as a Faculty but in our own professional and personal lives. The professionalism, commitment and dedication demonstrated during the on-going management of the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Pandemic is sincerely acknowledged and greatly appreciated. This year has once again highlighted how pathology services are at the core of patient care as we endeavor to balance and manage all requirements of the health services including COVID related and Non-COVID related health care.

It is difficult to encompass the expanse of work performed and contributed to by faculty fellows, associate members, Doctors in Training (DIT) and RCPI staff throughout this period. However we hope that this annual report will recognize as much as possible the extent to which all skills and expertise was utilized to ensure not only the provision of enhanced service demands but also how it contributed to the overall health care strategy with expert advice given to the DOH, HSE, development of guidelines etc. It is imperative also to recognize the work performed by so many in ensuring the continuation and maintenance of Faculty activities, particularly in the realm of Education and Training.

John F Kennedy quoted 'The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis'. One brush stroke stands for danger, the other for opportunity'. It is imperative therefore that reflection on faculty's management to our on-going challenges be an integral element to our future plans.

Integration of positive change is key and should include in particular an evaluation of the impact of conversion to online platforms for educational, training and indeed faculty affairs. I believe we have experienced, throughout this period, enhanced engagement and collaboration through these platforms including with our colleagues in Northern Ireland. It has enabled continued work on many significant and key projects including the survey on Autopsy/ Mortuary Services in Ireland, Faculty Governance Review, Faculty History, Digital Strategy, Undergraduate Pathology curriculum and indeed the report on "*Deploying Data-Driven Intelligence to measure the impact of COVID-19 on cancer care and cancer patients*". In addition, online platforms have enabled the Faculty to be more involved in continuing professional development through the Webinar series. The success of holding the RCPATH Part 2 examinations for Haematology and Histopathology in Ireland, obviating the need to travel to the UK, has indeed supported continuation of our discussions regarding perpetuation into the future. The announcement also of post-CSCST fellowships has afforded us the opportunity I believe to build on matching more closely educational requirements to pathology service needs.

As Dean of the Faculty, I would like to thank you all for your support and contribution to faculty activities and in particular to the support of educational and professional development of our DIT whilst we endeavor to ensure career progression. COVID-19 management, I have no doubt, will continue to dominate our activities into 2021 but I am confident however that our collective response has given us a strong platform to champion pathology service, workforce planning and educational developments to ensure our ability to manage all aspects of healthcare into the future.

Professor Louise Burke MD, FRCPath, FRCPI FFPATH FRCPI
Dean of the Faculty

Lay Board Members

Board activities and functions have been greatly enhanced by the presence and contributions of our two lay members. They assist in providing an alternate perspective as well as enhancing board activities employing their immense experience and diverse skill sets. Acknowledging the voluntary nature of this role and the time commitment given by both of these members, the faculty is very grateful and knows that its roles and missions are greatly enriched by their contributions.



Terry Prone, Chairman of the Communications Clinic joined the Faculty board in November of 2017.

Terry is one of the most successful businesswomen in this country for 50 years. She has trained people in 17 countries, published 29 books, written for the New York Times, Readers Digest, The Irish Times, The Sunday Times, Irish Independent and Irish Examiner.

Terry is a leading advisor on reputation and crisis handling to corporations, Governments and individuals. As managing Director of Carr Communications, she expanded its reach to provide training and consultancy in 17 overseas companies. In 2009 she became chairman of The Communications Clinic.



Dr Muiris O'Ceidigh, CEO of the National Milk Agency, joined the Faculty board this year, attending his first Board meeting in September 2020. Muiris has broad experience on many boards and regulatory authorities, holds a Doctorate in Governance and is a solicitor. He is a member of the Veterinary Council of Ireland, a former Public Interest Director on the Medical Science Registration Board and is a former Director of the Irish Red Cross.

Muiris has studied at Cambridge and Oxford University and is a business mentor on Corporate Governance and Regulation at the Cambridge Institute of Sustainable Leadership at Cambridge University. He is Chairman of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and has researched Civil & Human Rights and the media.

Highlights from 2020 Annual Symposium

Annual Symposium, 06 & 07 February at RCPI

The Faculty 38th Annual Symposium took place Thursday and Friday, 6th-7th February and incorporated the AGM, Admission Ceremony and the Faculty's annual dinner. The organising committee, chaired by Dr. Maeve Doyle, brought together a very interesting programme encompassing topics such as Fungal Infections, Forensic and Digital Pathology and GDPR.

Incorporating a poster and rapid-fire session for RCPI trainees and Undergraduate Medical Students, the conference was eligible for 8 CPD credits. For the first time the admission ceremony included its latest Associate (trainee) Members.



Prof Aurelie Fabre, Dr Niall Swan, Dr Siobhan Nicholson, Prof Mary Keogan, Dr Cynthia Heffron

Honorary Fellows

Prof Jo Martin, President of the Royal College of Pathologists, UK who spoke on "The future of Pathology in Ireland, 2020" and Prof Truls Leegard who presented on training and examinations were conferred with Honorary Fellowship of the Faculty at an admission ceremony.

George Green Medal

Presented to Dr. Naoimh O'Farrell for her work entitled 'Differential Expression Profiles of Oxidative Stress Levels in Barrett's Oesophagus compared to Oesophageal Adenocarcinoma'.

John D Kennedy Medal

Presented to Dr Susan Prendeville for her work entitled 'Role of Magnetic Resonance Imaging Targeted Biopsy in Detection of Prostate Cancer Harboring Adverse Pathological Features of Intraductal Carcinoma and Invasive Cribriform Carcinoma'

Paule Cotter Medal

Presented to Prof Mary Therese Cafferkey (Reynolds) for her outstanding contribution to clinical microbiology in Ireland. Prof Cafferkey was a founding fellow of the Faculty of Pathology.



Prof Louise Burke, Dean, awarding Dr Susan Prendeville the John D Kennedy Medal

Upcoming 40th Anniversary Celebrations



Photograph of Dr Robert Towers, first Dean with founding Fellows of the Faculty



Microscope and slides belonging to former College President Ephraim MacDowel Cosgrave (1853-1925)

Next year marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Faculty within RCPI. During 2020 the Heritage Centre has been working with the Dean, Faculty and the Vintage Pathologists group, to plan a series of events to mark this anniversary.

Central to the plans is the publication of a short history of the Faculty and of pathology in Ireland, being compiled and edited by Prof Katy Keohane and Prof Sean O'Briain. Many Fellows have already contributed to this project, and further submissions are being sought.

There will be a programme of webinars and a plan for an onsite event during 2021, with talks on the history and of pathology in Ireland. The Heritage Centre will be curating an exhibition on the Dublin Pathological Society which will be hosted both in No 6 Kildare Street and online. The Dublin Pathological Society was founded in 1838, was the first society of its kind in the British Isles, and its membership included many of the leading figures of Irish medicine in the 19th century.

The Heritage Centre is also taking the opportunity of the anniversary, and the reflection on the history of the specialties, to develop the pathology collections we hold. Pathology is one of the least represented

areas of medicine in our historic collections and this is something the Heritage Centre and Faculty would like to address. If you have any archives, photographs, instruments or other related items that you would consider adding to the collections please let us know.



Harriet Wheelock, Keeper of Collections, RCPI

Faculty Updates

New Director of Training and Education

Dr Maeve Doyle has taken up the role of Director of Training and Education, succeeding Prof Kieran Sheahan who has completed his term. Dr Doyle is Consultant Microbiologist, University Hospital Waterford, Clinical Senior Lecturer, UCC and Honorary Clinical Lecturer, RCSI and immediate past Honorary Secretary of the Faculty

New Honorary Secretary

Current Board member and Consultant Haematologist in Tallaght University Hospital Dr Ronan Desmond takes up the role of Honorary Secretary following the AGM.

New Honorary Treasurer

Current Board member and Consultant Microbiologist Dr Deirbhile Keady took up this role in 2020 following the Faculty AGM

Welcome to new and returning Faculty Board Members

- Prof. Rob Landers, Consultant Histopathologist, UHW
- Prof. Aurelie Fabre, Consultant Histopathologist, SVUH
- Dr. Marie Staunton, Consultant Histopathologist, Beaumont
- Prof. Mary Keogan, Consultant Immunologist, Beaumont
- Dr. Shari Shrinivasan, Consultant Chemical Pathologist, Beaumont
- Dr. Karen Burns, Consultant Microbiologist, Beaumont.

Faculty of Pathology representative to the newly constituted RCPI Council

I would like to congratulate Dr Joan Power, Consultant Haematologist, who has been elected to the newly constituted RCPI Council (2020) in the role of Faculty of Pathology Councilor. Joan is a Consultant Haematologist with the Irish Blood Transfusion Service, Senior Clinical Lecturer, University College Cork, Clinical Lead Advisor for Transfusion and Faculty of Pathology Board Member.

Faculty Governance Review Working Group

Review of the governance and overall functioning of the Faculty is a key goal for the current Dean, Prof Louise Burke. To assist in this, a new Governance working group have been created, chaired by Prof Rob Landers. Its purpose is to review the existing governance structures within the Faculty and make governance recommendations for improvements to the Faculty. There will be a Governance update at the Faculty AGM.

Faculty Scientific Meetings Committee

This committee, chaired by Dr. Joan Power, is tasked to organize the scientific programme for the Faculty Annual Symposium and any other scientific meetings organized by the Faculty as agreed by the Board and the committee's terms of reference. The committee also organizes the Faculty webinar series in partnership with the RCPI Events Team.

Faculty Credentials Committee

A Faculty Credentials Committee, chaired by Prof Aurelie Fabre, is tasked to advise on and review Fellowship and Associate Membership applications to join the Faculty.

Covid-19 Faculty Updates

The Faculty of Pathology are very grateful to the many Fellows, Associate members and RCPI Trainees who have worked and continue to work so hard to critically contribute to the pandemic response at local, faculty and governmental level. Our specialty is playing a really important and key role and we can be proud of our diverse contribution to this national effort. A special word of thanks in particular to our microbiology/virology colleagues, as well as those Faculty Fellows who are in clinical leadership roles in the management of our health care system.

Through our involvement in many different strands of the COVID 19 planning network we have been actively involved in relaying and providing important advice regarding Pathology services within the national framework. The Faculty Fellows have contributed to this national health care response through national and other committees/roles including:

NPHET

Dr. Cillian DeGascun, Consultant Virologist (NVRL)

Expert Advisory Group (EAG):

Dr. Cillian DeGascun, Consultant Virologist (NVRL)
Prof. Aurelie Fabre, Consultant Histopathologist, SVUH.

COVID-19 Mortality National Co-ordination Group

Dr. Linda Mulligan, Acting State Pathologist
Dr. Clive Kilgallen, Consultant Histopathologist, Chair of the Histopathology Working group.

Irish Medical Council

The Dean, and on behalf of the Faculty, participated in a consultative forum with the Irish Medical Council regarding re-introduction of non-COVID care in an optimal manner. The document produced with its recommendations has been submitted to the HSE and Department of Health.

National Clinical Lead for Healthcare-Associated Infection and Antimicrobial Resistance

Prof Martin Cormican

National Transfusion Advisory Group (NTAG)

Dr. Joan Power as Clinical Lead Advisor for Transfusion

Medical Leaders Forum

Both the Dean and Prof Mary Keogan sat on regular meetings of the Medical Leaders Forum. Convened in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and centered around information sharing, planning and response, the Medical Leaders Forum brought together post graduate training bodies, leaders in the clinical community, HSE and DOH.

SARS-CoV-2 Testing

The Dean has been working closely with Prof Mary Keogan, National Clinical Lead, during this period including on aspects related to COVID-19 testing. The Faculty hosted and contributed to:

- Regular Online meetings with Hospital laboratories regarding testing for SARS-CO-V2 – these on-going meetings offered laboratory managers, laboratory medical scientists and Microbiologists around the country an opportunity to discuss their experiences of testing for the virus and to share ideas and expertise and support each other
- Meetings with Hospital Group Nominees
- Meetings with INAB regarding remote laboratory assessments

Adaption to Online Activities

The Faculty adapted to the challenges Covid-19 presented by moving its activities online, including its Board and committee meetings from March onwards. The move to online meetings however also offered an opportunity for increased engagement in Faculty activities by those who for reasons of location or because of clinical and other commitments might hitherto have found it a challenge to make time for or travel to physical meetings.

Guidelines on Post-Mortem Examination practice during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Guidelines on post-mortem examination practice during the COVID 19 Pandemic were published. (Placed on the website May 20th, 2020) These guidelines were developed by the Autopsy subgroup of the Histopathology Working Group, chaired by Dr Clive Kilgallen.

<https://www.rcpi.ie/news/releases/faculty-of-pathology-publishes-guidelines-on-autopsy-practise-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

The Faculty's aim at all times is to ensure that all deaths can be investigated safely, fully, respectfully and with full empathy for the families of the deceased. The guidelines will be continually reviewed

An article about these guidelines is available via the link below:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/test-deceased-for-covid-19-before-postmortems-say-new-guidelines-1.4261276>

Test deceased for Covid-19 before postmortems, say new guidelines

Staff at substantial risk so autopsies should be restricted to mortuaries in Dublin and Cork

© Mon, May 25, 2020, 06:00

Paul Cullen Health Editor

 LISTEN NOW 02:00



Just five postmortems have been carried out on Covid-19-positive patients. The Irish Times reported earlier this

To more clearly understand how the COVID-19 pandemic, and in particular the 'Stay at home' period (March 27th - May 18th 2020), has impacted on our cancer services within the Republic of Ireland, a COVID-19 and Cancer subgroup was convened by the Dean, to pool data resources and where possible, to make comparisons with data already generated by DATA-CAN (the UK's National Health Data Research Hub for Cancer) and the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry (NICR).

The subgroup developed a clear picture of the adverse impact that the pandemic has had on cancer services in Ireland, within the limitations of the available Irish data.

Collaborators included the NHQI Programme, NCCP, the National GI Endoscopy Quality Improvement Programme and the Faculty, international collaborators were DATA-CAN and NICR. This work was presented to HSE and Department of Health.

<https://rcpi-live-cdn.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Cancer-Care-and-COVID19-Report.pdf>



Deploying Data-Driven Intelligence to measure the impact of COVID-19 on cancer care and cancer patients

Webinar and Podcast Series

Pathology webinar series

A significant development during this year, was the engagement and commitment to on-ongoing CPD activity through a series of webinars.

Faculty Fellows contributed to RCPI's series of popular weekly webinars aimed at providing clinicians with up-to-date information about the virus and patient care during the pandemic. In April a pathology focused RCPI webinar was presented whilst the Faculty also organized its own dedicated webinar in November to mark International Pathology day entitled "Pandemic Pathology - The Learning".

The webinar series will continue into 2021 with the organisation being led by Dr. Joan Power, the Chair of the Scientific Meetings committee.

RCPI Podcast series

As part of our public engagement work, both Dr Cillian De Gascun's and Prof Mary Keogan's talks at previous webinars were developed into podcasts. Dr De Gascun spoke about how Ireland built testing capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic and Prof Keogan spoke about SARS CoV2 immunity. Both podcasts are featured in "The Expert View" which is available on the RCPI website and on Spotify.

<https://www.rcpi.ie/covid19/rcpi-podcast-series/>



Irish Times Article

Having spoken at the April Faculty focused webinar, Faculty Board member Prof Mary Keogan's talk regarding Covid19 Immunity was recorded in an Irish Times article. Written by Dr Muiris Houston, a link for this article is below:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/like-the-sound-of-a-covid-19-immunity-passport-here-s-why-it-s-pie-in-the-sky-1.4254469>

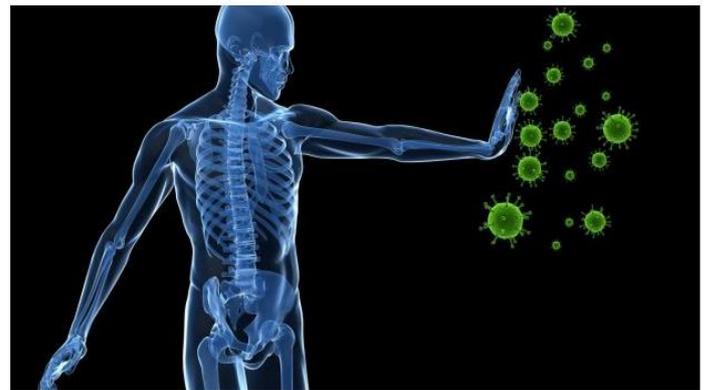
Like the sound of a Covid-19 'immunity passport'? Here's why it's pie in the sky

Muiris Houston: So far, there's no evidence surviving coronavirus guarantees immunity

© Mon, May 18, 2020, 06:01

Dr Muiris Houston

3



Many human infections with other viral pathogens, such as influenza virus, do not produce a durable immune response.

Critical Results and Core Curriculum

Communication of Critical Results for Patients in the Community

The National Clinical Programme for Pathology (HSE/RCPI) launched a new guideline for communicating critical lab results to patients. The new guideline was launched by HSE CEO Paul Reid, on Jan 30th 2020, and sets out the agreed approach and timelines for communicating results to patients in the community based on the severity of potential underlying diagnoses, imminent risk to the patient and the urgency of intervention.

The new guideline with its clear guidelines will significantly enhance the efficacy of dealing with such results for timely treatment or intervention for the patient.



The National Clinical Programme for Pathology (HSE/RCPI) launched a new guideline for communicating critical lab results to patients. The new guideline was launched by HSE CEO Paul Reid

Pathology Core Curriculum for future medical students

Led by Prof Hilary Humphreys this work is being prepared to reflect the Faculty's vision for Pathology Education for future medical students.

A draft curriculum was circulated in December 2020 for review by Fellows. The document will be discussed at the Faculty AGM on 04 February 2021 to enable its endorsement.

Vintage Pathologists and International Affairs

Vintage Pathologists Group

The Vintage Pathologists planned its May 2020 meeting for Cork, but the meeting was postponed due to the Covid19 lockdown. A virtual meeting was held, Harriet Wheelock, the Keeper of Collections in the College, discussed the Dean's plans for the 40th anniversary of the Faculty of Pathology in 2021, including a suggestion that the Vintage Pathologists might write informal histories of aspects of pathology during the period.

The hope that the November meeting would be a real physical meeting faded by the early autumn as the virus persisted. The meeting was held again by Zoom and included an update on the history of pathology project, led by Katy Keohane. Con Feighery spoke on newborn screening for immune deficiency (SCID), Katy described the life of Charles Donovan, a Cork graduate of eponymous infectious disease fame. Sean O'Briain remembered Prof Dermot Hourihane who died in July and Michael Madden described Iles De Salut, in French Guiana, the site of Devil's Island, the notorious French prison. The next meeting is planned for 24 May 2021, in Cork.



Vintage Pathologist Group at their November 2020 Meeting

International Affairs

The Clinical Fellowship Programme has had outstanding success in the Pathology Programmes with successful graduates across the Pathology Specialties.

Particular thanks go to Prof Cecily Quinn and her colleagues for facilitating and supporting International Trainees.

Feedback from trainees has been excellent and all have praised the quality of the pathology services, the training opportunities and the overall teaching.

Current Trainees:

4 x Histopathology Trainees

Incoming Trainees:

Two offers have been issued with targeted start dates of July 2021.

Graduates:

1 x Hematology graduate
 11 x Histopathology graduates
 2 x Chemical Pathology graduates
 3 x Clinical Microbiology graduates

Education and Training

The Education & Training Committee (ETC) met on five occasions during 2020. The Director of Education & Training, Dr Maeve Doyle, was assisted by the following:

National Specialty Directors:

Chemical Pathology	Dr Vivion Crowley & Prof Pat Twomey
Clinical Microbiology	Dr Cillian De Gascun
Haematology	Dr Jeremy Sargent, Dr Oonagh Gilligan & Dr Clodagh Keohane
Histopathology	Dr Cynthia Heffron & Dr Niall Swan
Immunology	Prof Mary Keogan

A sincere thank you to the outgoing NSDs.

	New NSDs	Outgoing NSDs
Chemical Pathology	Prof Pat Twomey	Dr Vivion Crowley
Haematology	Dr Oonagh Gilligan & Dr Clodagh Keohane	Dr Jeremy Sargent
Histopathology	Dr Niall Swan	Dr Cynthia Heffron

A sincere thank you to outgoing Trainee Reps:

	New Trainee Reps	Outgoing Trainee Reps
Chemical Pathology	Dr Sabah Abdelfadil	Dr Renuka Durganaudu
Clinical Microbiology	Dr Aaron Doherty	Dr Sinead O'Donnell
Haematology	Dr Valerie Broderick & Dr Daniel Angelov	Dr Elizabeth Smyth & Dr Jillian Coll
Histopathology BST	Dr Katie Beauchamp	Dr Victoria Malone
Histopathology HST	Dr Darren Kilmartin	Dr Maura Cotter
Immunology	Dr Jacklyn Sui	

Thank you also to our **Regional Specialty Advisors in Histopathology** for their contribution:

Dr Brian Hayes (Munster)
 Dr Susan Conlon (Dublin North)
 Dr Maeve Redmond (Dublin North)
 Dr Stephen Crowther (Dublin South)
 Dr Helen Ingoldsby (Galway)

2020 has been a year of change and adapting to change for our trainees and trainers, a busy year but a year of achievements. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our training programmes, not only in relation to RCPATH, UK examination deferral but also because it has led to a significant alteration in our normal work practises within our departments, temporary suspension of many of our normal training methodologies together with temporary re-deployment for some of our colleagues and trainees out of the specialty. Through the combined efforts of the Faculty, RCPI, NSD’s Trainers and Trainees, Education and Training continued, and career progression was maintained whilst supporting and delivering hospital services. Sincere thanks to all those involved, as considerable work and effort ensured that we mitigated against major impact to our educational goals.

Trainees

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented challenges for Pathology trainees. These included front line service provision, increased work demands and redeployment. Aside from the professional demands, the pandemic also required personal resilience from trainees, due to increasing stress and pressures faced in uncertain times. The ETC, working closely with RCPI, adapted the Training Programmes to address the obstacles created by the covid-19 pandemic.

Pathology in a time of Covid-19 – A summary of how we adapted:

	Challenge	Solution
End of year assessments	Travel restrictions Social distancing	End of year assessments (EYA) were carried out remotely using the 'zoom' platform. Training priorities for 2020 – 2021 were identified at the end of year and penultimate year assessments at the end of June 2020.
Mandatory courses	Travel restrictions Social distancing	Online modules were developed. Final year training requirements were prioritized.
Study days	Travel restrictions	Study days are delivered by online platforms.
Clinical Experience and Career Progression	Loss of rotations Reduced access to specialty work	At the EYA, flexibility was exercised in assessing the training activities. Use of online platforms such as Expert Path was encouraged and funding for ongoing access to Expert Path was secured.
Out of Programme Experience (OPE)	Travel restrictions Manpower	Many of the OPE were cancelled/ postponed and training provided locally.
Laboratory training	Social distancing	Extensions to microscope arms for microscopy training. Use of electronic platforms to share slides between rooms.
Exams	FRCPATH Spring 2020 exams postponed Travel Social distancing	Trainees were facilitated with an extension of training where required, to ensure CSCST. Written online exams with remote invigilation. Irish centres for FRCPATH part 2 'Wet practical' exams.



Left: Exam station with hand sanitizer and detergent wipes



Right: RCPI Irish centre for FRCPath part 2 examinations in Haematology showing candidates in a well-ventilated room with social distancing

Medical Council Accreditation / Re-accreditation

Accreditation meetings went ahead with the Medical Council in March 2020 led by Siobhan Kearns and Georgina Farr, RCPI with input from all specialties. HST in Chemical Pathology, Clinical Microbiology, Haematology, Immunology and Neuropathology underwent Medical Council accreditation for the first time. HST and BST in Histopathology underwent re-accreditation. Informal feedback each day was generally very positive. The final report was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, but is expected early 2021

Training Site Accreditation

The Accreditation team have used a risk-based approach with a move to an online process for training site inspection using three forms (HR/Specialty/Trainee) to address outstanding inspections. NSDs are asked to review documentation and can schedule a remote inspection if this is deemed necessary. The plan moving forward in 2021 is to move to an Accreditation model which will assess multiple specialties in a site at the same time to reduce the overall number of inspections at each site.

Governance Review

In line with the college-wide review of governance, the education and training committee have reviewed and updated the terms of reference, developed a new sub-committee with a focus on exams and another to review mandatory courses. The job descriptions and process for appointing NSDs and RSAs has been revised, these appointments now involve a formal application and interview. The process for appointment of trainee representatives is currently under review.

National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP)

- **Workforce planning**

The Dean, the National Clinical lead for Pathology, and the Director of Training and Education, met with Frank Murray, NDTP to discuss the difficulties under the current system of dynamically being able to workforce plan. A project is underway to collect and evaluate the data necessary for optimal manpower planning, including details of the present workforce, numbers for optimal service delivery and current and future gaps. This data will be an invaluable resource to the ETC for directing & enhancing educational and training programmes to ensure required expertise is available to meet the workforce demands. In July 2020, negotiations led to an extra post in HST in Microbiology for the July 2021 intake, in recognition of the increased demands created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **COVID Era Post CSCST Fellowships**

The HSE, in partnership with the Postgraduate Training Bodies, are establishing a number of Covid Era Post CSCST Fellowships to commence in July 2021 in key areas of need within the Health Service. These Fellowships provide opportunities for those doctors who have completed specialist training in Ireland to access high-quality training in a specialised area of clinical care. They are designed for doctors who need to acquire additional training or experience which was not available on their HST programme. The additional training exposes graduates of the Irish postgraduate training programmes to subspecialties and advanced clinical skills.

- **ExpertPath**

ExpertPath is an anatomic pathology/histopathology online decision support and educational system. NDTP has agreed to fund access to ExpertPath going forward. While access has been offered to Histopathology only up to this point, it is hoped that this can be rolled out for all specialties.

Forum of Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies

The Director and the Dean represent the Faculty on the forum. The group are working to develop a national strategy to shape, sustain and strengthen post-graduate training in Ireland 2021-2030. The key pillars of the strategy are design for quality, quality improvement, quality assurance during and from training in Ireland and quality management from strengthened training bodies.

Flexible Training

The number of trainees in flexible training has increased significantly due to a combination of funding for flexible training and the demand from trainees for this flexibility. This has worked well within pathology. The HSE are very willing to support this initiative along with arrangements for job sharing.

ICAT

The Wellcome – Health Research Board Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT) Programme is a unique all Ireland cross-institutional, comprehensive national programme for Clinician Scientists based at six major Irish universities and their affiliated hospital groups. The Faculty currently has 5 trainees taking part in the ICAT Programme.

ICAT Fellows

- Haematology – Dr Helen Fogarty, Dr Mark Gurney, Dr Dearbhla Doherty & Dr Sarah Kelliher
- Immunology – Dr Katie Ridge

Events

- **Medical Careers Day, 15 October 2020**

In the ongoing commitment by the Faculty to recruitment and engaging with postgraduates regarding careers in pathology, representatives from the Faculty provided recorded talks for a webinar presented by Lauren Kerchner, Coordinator Medical Training

- **Annual Study Day for trainees and postgraduates of all specialties**

This annual event forms part of the Faculty's ongoing strategy to engage and assist postgraduate pathology trainees in their career strategies. This year's event was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic but is planned for April/May 2021 to be held via webinar.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought numerous challenges for our trainees, trainers and postgraduate Training Bodies. This year which highlighted the resilience and commitment of our healthcare professionals, the ETC review the ways in which training has adapted to the challenges, identifying changes that have worked well to progress training and using this learning to plan our training strategy for 2021.

Founding Member Obituaries

Professor Dermot Hourihane



It was with great sadness that we extend our sincere condolences to the family of Professor Dermot Hourihane (1933-2020). With his passing, pathology in Ireland has indeed lost a great teacher, trainer, mentor, colleague and friend.

As well as being recognised as a leading academic and diagnostic pathologist, a force for change in Irish pathology and for his broader contribution to Irish society, Prof Hourihane was also a founding Fellow of the Faculty of Pathology of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in 1981 and was its second Dean (1984-87).

He was a physician driven by a desire to improve the standard of medicine and the health services in Ireland. He would regularly lead death review conferences. In the Faculty he pushed for the replacement of the general pathologist by specialists in the individual pathology disciplines.

Click [here](#) for an appreciation from the Faculty, penned by Prof Sean O’Brian, past Dean and Chair of the Vintage Pathologists Group

Professor John (Jack) Harbison



Former State Pathologist and Founding Member of this Faculty, Professor John (Jack) Harbison passed away on 18 December 2020.

Prof Harbison was appointed as the State's first forensic pathologist in 1974. Acting as the State's only Forensic Pathologist, he traveled across the country as an independent expert involved in the investigation of suspicious deaths on behalf of the coroners and the Gardaí. His distinctive figure became familiar to the Irish public, and he regularly appeared on the evening news. During his pioneering 30-year career, he was involved in several high-profile cases, firmly establishing forensic pathology as a crucial part of the criminal justice system.

A larger than life character, his lectures to pathology societies and medical schools were legendary. He was known for his strong sense of medical ethics and his dedication to his job. He diligently maintained his objectivity in every case, and his focus was always on justice and the families of the deceased. His dedication, professionalism, legacy and extensive expertise will never be forgotten. He was and still is an inspiration to aspiring pathologists everywhere.

Written by State Pathologist Dr Linda Mulligan and Dr Margot Bolster, Locum Assistant State Pathologist. Image provided by Bobby Studios.

Histopathology Working Group

Histopathology Working Group Update

Many of the members of the Working Group have been on national covid related committees contributing to the response to the pandemic. One of the challenges was to create autopsy guidelines for pathologists, to ensure safe practice so that there is no delay in ascribing a death certification with the local coroners.

The HWG created a set of guidelines, which were published on the website. These emphasised multi-disciplinary group discussions between the pathologists and coroners to manage and triage cases. The pandemic and our response has highlighted to us the deficiencies in post mortem infrastructure and service in the country with only two mortuaries that are capable of dealing with the covid virus.

Postmortems

The HWG has commenced a review on postmortem services. It is clear that resources are limited and that there are fewer pathologists doing postmortems. There are several major laboratories that are now not carrying out coroners' postmortems. During this year, we have sent out online questionnaires to pathology trainees and consultants. There has been a very strong response from our pathology community, and we are working to analyse the data and make recommendations for how pathology service in the future may be managed.

Perinatal Pathology

In the early part of the year the HWG, together with the Faculty, Prof. Mary Keogan, Programme Pathology Lead, and the Consultant Appointment Advisory Committee meeting worked together to create a new sub-specialty in the pathology discipline: consultant histopathologist with a special interest in perinatal pathology. This is a significant step forward and will emphasising the importance of perinatal pathology.

Cervical Check

During the year, the HWG and pathology fellows have engaged with Cervical Check. There are changes how cervical screening is being performed, moving to a molecular based platform.

This will have the effect, over the next two or three years, of increasing the number of cervical biopsies. Dr. Noirin Russell has been appointed as the Clinical Director. Both Drs. Russell and Nuttall are very keen to liaise with the HWG and the Faculty of Pathology, as to how cytology and pathology will develop with this new molecular platform. It will be very important that all histopathology fellows that are involved with cervical check would liaise with the HWG in this matter.

Legality:

There were further intensive discussions amongst the HWG and interested fellows in relation to the recent High Court Judgement and the Supreme Court Judgement. There was much discussion on the issue of "absolute certainty". From our discussions, we are unsure as to what this means for screening services. We are not sure how this relates to histopathology and other screening modalities including biochemical screening assays. Work has started in the Faculty in obtaining a legal opinion on this. This will commence and continue in the New Year.

Mortuary Survey:

The Histopathology Working Group is presently conducting a survey of mortuary/autopsy facilities in Ireland to inform a report detailing the Faculty of Pathology's recommendations for future delivery of Post-Mortem Examination Services in Ireland, with particular emphasis on the Coronial Service.

These surveys are a mechanism for all Fellows to inform this process and we look forward to achieving a 100% return of completed survey questionnaires.

Digital Pathology and The OSP

The Digital Pathology National Project Subgroup in April 2019 had its first meeting in October 2019. Dr. Neil O'Hare presented at the Faculty's AGM on 6th February 2020 and a DP survey was sent to 23 Irish Public Hospitals, regarding interest in the project, data on workload, number of slides generated each year, MDT discussions, cases sent externally, as well as staffing levels, and IT support.

Most hospitals have returned their survey and this data is currently being analysed to facilitate a business plan proposal to the HSE/NCCP/Dept of Health in Q1 of 2021.

Digital Pathology National Project:

A project to set up a National Digital Pathology (DP) network similar to the radiology NIMIS system in Ireland that will allow Irish Pathologists to use digital slides for reporting, MDT discussions, external consultations & reviews, and as education and training is being rolled out. The COVID19 pandemic has emphasized the need for efficient computer based remote education and work.

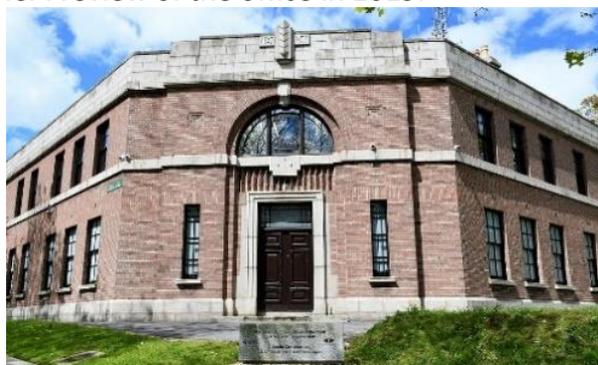
Digital Pathology is a rapidly developing technology that has the potential to improve patient care and support the pathology workforce by not only assisting with timely diagnostics, but also integrating histopathology in multidisciplinary discussions, and as an educational tool. This benefits patients by enabling the rapid referral of cases between hospitals or across pathology networks, enhancing access to expert subspecialty advice and opinion on diagnoses. This is key for patients' safety as it reduces the risk of glass slides being misplaced or damaged.

The Office of The State Pathologist

The last two years have brought significant changes, with the loss of senior consultants to retirement and a restructuring of the management within the Department of Justice. Dr Linda Mulligan is currently the Acting Chief State Pathologist. Dr. Mulligan is also a board member of the Faculty. State Pathologist, Dr Kathleen Han Suyin, and two Locum Assistant State Pathologists, Dr Heidi Okkers and Dr Margot Bolster (Cork) complete the team of consultant forensic pathologists providing the service. A small administrative staff and a senior medical scientist provide clerical and histological assistance.

As a result of the pandemic, the OSP found itself in the unique position of being a communication hub between the Faculty, the Coroner's Society of Ireland and the Department of Justice. This led to clearer communication between all stakeholders which will be of huge benefit in the future, particularly in relation to progressing both the non-forensic coronial service and recognition of forensic pathology as a medical specialty, two keys objectives for the OSP and the Faculty.

The OSP continues to evolve to maintain professional standards expected in this field. This year saw the introduction of on-site radiological imaging (with access to the National Integrated Medical Imaging system) to assist with ballistic and trauma related cases. The final test phase of a purpose-built laboratory information management system (LIMS) is almost complete. The LIMS will provide significant benefit for future research, audit and quality improvement. The Faculty, OSP and Department of Justice continue to engage on the implementation of the recommendations from the RCPI review of the office in 2019.



National Clinical Programme for Pathology

The National Clinical Programme for Pathology (NCP-P) was established in 2011 as a joint initiative between the HSE Clinical Strategy and Programmes Division, and the Faculty of Pathology. The programme aims to support the development of pathology, to optimise patient care and ensure that pathology services support evolving models of care and clinical programmes. Structures have been developed to ensure close, collaborative working relationship with the Faculty of Pathology, which is in the interest of patients and pathology services. The current Clinical Lead is Prof Mary Keogan, who is also a Faculty board member.

Following the Review of Clinical Programmes, the structure and reporting relationships of Clinical Advisory Groups has been standardised. In line with the new guidelines, a multidisciplinary Clinical and Scientific Advisory Group (CSAG) will be formed. Terms of Reference and Membership have been agreed. Working closely with the Board of the Faculty of Pathology, and the Governance Subgroup, representation of the Faculty on the CSAG has been agreed. The Clinical Lead of the National Clinical Programme, Prof Keogan, is a member of appropriate Faculty Committees. This will ensure that the Clinical programme meets current HSE structures for clinical programmes, while facilitating an effective and efficient working relationship with the Faculty.

Brexit Preparedness

While laboratories must put their own contingency plans in place for Brexit, the NCP-P recognised that some work is required towards addressing this.

GDPR implications could usefully be centralised. Great credit is due to Anne Mannion, who has obtained signed SCCs for all Irish labs who took part in the project for over 2/3 of the UK laboratories involved to date. This has been of significant help to all laboratories in the country.

Role of the Programme for Pathology in the response to Covid-19

The NCP-P has played a key role in the acute hospitals/ response to SARS-CoV-2. The Clinical Lead is a member of the Laboratory Capacity Taskforce.

NCP-P have contributed in supporting procurement of reagents and equipment, contributing to service modelling, implementation projects, allocation of scarce resources.

Twenty-three laboratories have capacity for both rapid and batch tests, with an additional 8 labs offering rapid testing.

Key contributions included:

- Coordination of procurement and distribution of over 100 blood gas analysers to support hospital reconfiguration during first wave. NCP-P worked closely with the National Near Patient Testing Consultative Group to ensure support and training materials were available for roll out.
- Diversification of PCR and extraction utilisation. Early expansion of PCR testing was hampered by supply chain difficulties. By diversifying utilisation, and co-ordinating activity, a more resilient testing system was developed.
- In collaboration with the Faculty, regular zoom calls were held to enhance communication between labs, keep people up to date with rapidly changing guidance and requirements, and to share learning.

- The NCP-P coordinated a shared approach to assay validation, ensuring assays were thoroughly validated, while reducing the work at individual sites, and preserving scarce reagents for patient care. Standards for validation were developed in collaboration with Prof Martin Cormican and Dr Cillian De Gascun and shared with laboratories and suppliers. Of the rapid assays evaluated 3/9 were not suitable for use due to poor sensitivity and/or reproducibility. Similarly, 2 CE marked batch PCR assays were not suitable for widespread use. The collaborative approach was also of assistance with detecting poor performing batches of some individual assays.
- NREC approval to develop a National Validation Panel was obtained, and 4 serological assays were fully validated.
- A validation project was undertaken of different antigen tests, and the Clinical Lead co-chaired an Antigen testing Working Group, contributing to decisions about when and where these assays could be usefully deployed.
- The Clinical lead also contributed to a number of RCPI webinars to update Members and Fellows of the college in relation to advances in testing.

While Covid related workload required prioritisation this year, other key projects were also progressed this year:

Engagement with MedLIS

The pandemic has heightened the need for a national laboratory record. MedLIS development has continued throughout the year, with the first 2 go-lives planned for 2021.

The NCP-P contributed to the development of a Guidance Document for Management of Laboratory Data in Special Circumstances, to guide MedLIS data.

National Laboratory Handbook

Given the workload of all colleagues in laboratories this year, a limited number of documents were added to the handbook. These included guidance on testing for SARS-CoV-2, to inform clinicians using the appropriate test at the appropriate time and the use of serological assays.

Manpower Planning and Engagement with the NDTP

A number of NDTP meetings were held during the year in relation to manpower planning, in particular, looking at challenges of manpower planning for small specialties and subspecialties. Additional sub-specialties and special interests were defined with NDTP, and through engagement with NCCP and other clinical programmes, as well as fellows of the Faculty of Pathology, a survey is planned for 2021 to further inform manpower planning. Eleven priority pathology posts to address critical service vulnerability in services were funded in the Winter plan.

Chronic Disease Management

The NCP-P was asked in Autumn 2020 to develop a plan for provision of Natriuretic Peptide testing for GPs to support the roll out of the Chronic Disease Management Programme, utilising public hospital laboratories. At the time of writing the plan is being finalised and is expected to deliver considerable value to vulnerable patients from early 2021.

The ICCR

The International Collaboration on Cancer Reporting (ICCR)

The ICCR was founded in 2011 by the Australasian (RCPA), US (CAP) and UK (RCPath) Colleges of Pathology and the Canadian Association of Pathologists-Association Canadiennedes Pathologists (CAP-ACP). The current expanded membership includes the European Society of Pathology (ESP), the Royal College of Pathologists UK, the College of American Pathologists (CAP), The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA), the Canadian Association of Pathologists (CAP-ACP) in association with the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC), the American Society of Clinical Pathology (ASCP), the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Faculty of Pathology (RCPI FoP), the German Society of Pathology (DGP), the Brazilian Society of Pathology (SBP) the Hong Kong College of Pathologists, the Austrian Society of Pathology/IAP Austrian Division (ASP), and the Japanese Society of Pathology (JSP). Its role is to develop and produce evidence-based datasets for reporting of cancer resections for worldwide use. Reporting of cancer resection specimens using standardized datasets improves the quality of pathology reports and allows for optimal collection of demographics and specific prognostic information to allow for optimal planning of health services.

Currently in Ireland, pathologists use a variety of narrative and structured reporting models with each pathologist using datasets as per personal preference. Through our Quality Improvement links with the President of the ICCR Dr. John Srigley, the Faculty of Pathology, RCPI, was invited to join the ICCR. The membership of the ICCR is a yearly fee of USD \$10,000. The fees are used to cover the costs of publishing of the cancer datasets, maintaining the ICCR website, financing meetings, developing brochures to gain sponsors and producing publication materials. The Faculty became a sustaining member of the ICCR in 2018 & Faculty Fellows, nominated via the QI working group, were invited to join the

Board (Professor Kieran Sheahan) & the dataset authoring committee of cancer datasets (Dr Ann Treacy). A number of Fellows have since co-authored cancer datasets in specific organ systems. Through the Faculty of Pathology, these opportunities are publicized and allow Irish pathologists with interests in these areas to become part of this international collaboration

The benefits of the membership are as follows:

- Membership of an international agency to develop new cancer datasets
- Improvements of existing cancer datasets
- Research opportunities
- Collaboration with international experts
- Contribution to the development of cancer datasets with a commitment to rolling out of structured standardized reporting for all cancer cases in Ireland. Thanks to membership of the ICCR, the ICCR datasets have become the standard for the MEDLIS project & steps are underway to produce a software licensing agreement to facilitate this. The ICCR datasets will be integrated into the LIS with all laboratories in the country reporting cancer cases with the use of structured template reports / synoptic reports. This will be facilitated by the internationally recognized middleware programme 'mTuitive'.
- The collection of synoptic reports nationwide will generate accurate, complete reporting on all of the cancers diagnosed and resected in Ireland. This will allow for a more accurate assessment of epidemiological and demographic data along with specific data to guide all cancer services in Ireland. The national data is of importance to national stakeholders involved in data collection and planning of services such as the Irish Cancer Registry, the Irish Cancer Control Program, the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health.

UPDATE FOR 2020

Three active workstreams are currently prioritised

1. Standards Development

Internationally harmonized cancer pathology datasets and reporting guides incorporating contemporary morphologic and molecular standards from partner organizations including IARC (WHO), AJCC and UICC/TNM and specialty societies continue to be developed. In 2017 the ICCR agreed to develop datasets in synchrony with the WHO Classification of Tumour (5th edition). 31 articles related to the ICCR datasets have been published in peer-reviewed journals. As of November 2020, 43 datasets have been published including 13 updates. Published datasets are available on the ICCR website following updating, open consultation and review. There are 14 new datasets and 7 updates currently in development.

2 Translations

To translate datasets into multiple languages for adoption of reporting standards in both Developed and Low & Middle Income Countries. In 2018, with the support of the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP), 21 datasets were translated into Spanish, French and Portuguese. The translation of ICCR datasets is critical as the IARC/WHO Classification of Tumours “Bluebooks” are not being translated.

3 Implementation

To transform the dataset standards into machine readable formats and to facilitate their electronic implementation. In order to make best use of the ICCR Datasets, pathologists need access to structured reporting tools. A significant area of advancement in 2020 has been the interest shown by Laboratory System and middleware vendors and jurisdictions wanting to implement the ICCR datasets.



NQI Programme

The National Specialty Quality Improvement programmes specialise in gathering quality improvement (QI) data in three diagnostic specialties: Histopathology, Gastrointestinal Endoscopy and Radiology.

The goal of these programmes, which are funded by the HSE National Quality Improvement Team, is to optimise patient care through facilitating and supporting the use of evidence-based quality improvement in diagnosis and reporting. The data gathered via these Programmes is also reported on locally and is aggregated in annual National Data Reports, which can be used to drive quality improvement in hospitals.

Summary of key activities 2020

7th Annual National Data Report

The report was compiled using national, pseudonimised and anonymised data collected from the National Quality Assurance and Improvement System (NQAIS) from 1 January to 31 December 2019. The webinar encouraged interaction in live Q and A, provoking interesting discussions, and providing a platform to explore quality improvement activities at local level and the effective use of QI data in the pursuit of improved care.

The 7th Annual National Data Report was presented at the National Histopathology QI Programme online webinar on 10 December 2020

2020 Highlights

Dr Ann Treacy, Consultant Histopathologist, Mater Private Hospital Dublin took over as Chair of the National Histopathology QI Programme Working Group.

Dr Nick van der Westhuizen, Chair, British Columbia Electronic Synoptic Pathology Reporting Program joined the NHQI webinar “The Benefits of Electronic Synoptic Reporting – British Columbian Experience.”

- Dr. Miriam Griffin led a MedLIS session during this webinar which gave attendees the opportunity to become familiar with aspects of the new system due for roll-out in the near future along with features of synoptic reports which will be integral to the system and reporting of cancer cases in the future.
- Dr Ann Treacy closed the session with a high-level look at plans for the year ahead including a review of KQIs and ongoing work with sites on managing and meeting targets.
- The webinar encouraged interesting discussions, providing a platform to explore quality improvement activities at local level and the effective use of QI data in the pursuit of improved care.

Annual National Data Report

Analysis of QI data for the eight Annual National Data Report will commence in early January and the report will be available for the 2021 National Histopathology QI Programme Conference/ Webinar. We are continuing to promote the Programme and to promote Quality Improvement activity at a local level in laboratories across the country.

MedLIS

The National Medical Laboratory Information System Programme is a complex eHealth programme which aims to provide a national electronic laboratory record across all HSE funded laboratories, hospitals and healthcare providers.

“The strategic goal for the MedLIS project is to ensure patients and healthcare providers have rapid, 24-hour access to complete and up-to-date accurate laboratory data across all sites”

The Faculty has MedLIS project board representation including Prof Mary Keogan, Dr Brian O’Connell, Dr Shari Srivathan, Dr Su Maung and Dr Brendan Doyle. The MedLIS national project team contains 27 members, predominantly medical scientists with a smaller full time Cerner (vendor) team. Dr Miriam Griffin is National Clinical Director of the MedLIS programme.

The programme provides the following:

- A securely stored complete laboratory record irrespective of where the test has been carried out, and where the patient presents
- Electronic laboratory order communications and results for hospitals, GPs and other users of the healthcare system
- End to End Specimen tracking
- Analyser ready labels for specimens
- A single archive for legacy laboratory data

2020 Updates:

The final testing phases were planned for 2020 but were disrupted by the COVID pandemic. The pandemic resulted in many team members released back to laboratories or supporting the national Covid Test Tracker initiative.

The hospital implementation groups were also recalled for clinical duties. The experiences with COVID have demonstrated the absolute need for a national laboratory record. The Go live dates are now revised in light of these delays and CGH will go live in February 2021 followed by Beaumont Hospital in May 2021. Training has begun in Cavan General Hospital and will start in Beaumont Hospital in January 2021.

There has been substantial refinement of the microbiology solution over the last 12 months following interaction with, and guidance given by the Irish Society of Clinical Microbiologists. The programme has created substantial Data Privacy documentation to reflect the privacy designs. This documentation was positively received by the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.

MedLIS will provide Irish hospital laboratories and their users with enhanced functionality, test guidance and IT stability. It has proved to be a very challenging endeavor which will only succeed with cooperation and goodwill. National guidelines and standardisation, where possible, will greatly assist further development.

We would like to thank all of Faculty members who have participated in the programme for their clinical advice and work towards creating common standards.



Irish National Accreditation Board

The Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) is the accrediting body for diagnostic medical laboratories in Ireland. It employs assessors from Ireland and further afield to assist in the process of inspecting and accrediting Irish laboratories.

INAB continued to conduct assessments of diagnostic laboratories for the purposes of accreditation by remote means during 2020. While the integrity of the process was not compromised, it is not considered to be a sustainable alternative for on-site assessments. However, it is intended that the benefits seen during remote assessments be incorporated into assessments creating a blended approach in the future.

National Accreditation Strategy

INAB is currently developing a national accreditation strategy for Ireland, due for completion in 2021. This is the first time such a strategy has been in place and it is an opportunity to frame and direct accreditation over the next five years. During 2020, new areas of accredited activity is being considered include the areas of autopsy services. It is planned to fully implement new accreditation standards in biobanking in 2021.

Assessments

A significant ongoing challenge faced by INAB is the lack of assessors available from the various medical laboratory disciplines to assist with the assessments. As a result, scheduling of assessments may become increasingly inflexible.

“INAB and MSAC are appealing to medically qualified experts in the laboratory disciplines to consider becoming an assessor”

No previous experience is needed for these roles and additional training is provided.

In addition, each assessor is supported by an INAB officer familiar with the assessment procedures. If the pool of assessors increases, the time commitment associated with assessments would decrease and the flexibility of scheduling would improve. Potentially interested consultants should consider the benefits of assessor experience when preparing their own laboratories for INAB assessment. Further information on the application process is available at www.inab.ie



National Transfusion Advisory Group (NTAG)

The inaugural meeting of NTAG was held in January. The Faculty, as the statutory body with responsibility for haematologists training in Ireland, supported setting up a National Transfusion Committee which evolved into a proposal for a clinical programme for transfusion/ clinical lead advisor (CLA) for transfusion. This proposal was ultimately supported by the National Clinical Advisor and Group Lead HSE and Medical and Scientific Director of the IBTS.



NTAG Response to Covid-19

The Officers Group agreed that a working group would be set up to define the actual blood supply levels which would trigger an alert of reduced supply to hospitals.

Weekly meetings of the NTAG officers were held from March 20th. Dr Sorcha Ní Loinsigh acted as Deputy CLA and was co-opted to NTAG and the officers group. In addition the three NTAG Pillar groups - IHS transfusion SIG (chaired by Dr Hilary O'Leary meeting weekly from 20 March), the Academy of Clinical Science & Laboratory Medicine (ACSLM) and the National Haemovigilance SIG (Chairs Fergus Guilfoyle and Denise Murphy) with the IBTS and the NHO, were in active communication with the CLA supporting NTAG activities.

To inform blood supply demand from the changes in service delivery planned to enable management of COVID-19 health care demand, the CLA developed an audit (with the support of Ms Miriam Kennedy, RCSI). This was piloted and then circulated by the electronic tool 'Qualtrex' to each hospital with a transfusion laboratory, with 100% response.

This gave an informative pattern of usage by specialty, demographics and components and further service delivery plans were shared. These audits had the active support of the IHS Transfusion special interest group and the ACSLM.

NTAG Wider Membership Engagement

Several working groups have been formed- 'Transfusion support for Fetuses, Neonates and Paediatric patients' (Chair Prof Corrina McMahon), 'Overarching Transfusion Committees' (Chair Dr Sorcha Ní Loinsigh), 'Patient Blood Management' (Chair Dr Joan Fitzgerald), 'Acute life threatening haemorrhage' (Chair Mr Morgan McMonagle –to parallel the Ministerial commissioned NCEC guideline and adapt to other clinical scenarios), 'Procurement of peripheral blood samples and wrong blood in tube WBIT' (Chair Dr Hilary O'Leary) and 'Education and Training' (Chair Dr Andrew Hodgson).



Scientific Meetings Committee

The Faculty Scientific Meetings Committee, a sub-committee of the Board, is tasked to ‘organize the scientific programme for the Faculty Annual Symposium and any other scientific meetings organized by the Faculty as agreed by the Board and by the committee’s terms of reference.

Summary of key activities 2020

Annual Verification Process

The 2020/21 committee is chaired by Dr Joan Power with membership including Dr’s Maeve Doyle, Mary Keogan, Cynthia Heffron, Linda Mulligan, Marie Staunton and Ms Harriet Wheelock, Mr Shane Walshe, Ms Kerry McArdle and Mr Darragh Whelan supporting from RCPI and Faculty. The committee initially met on July 30th and have had a series of follow-up meetings.

Events

In the circumstances of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the celebration of the 40th Anniversary symposium, the committee proposed to the Board that we host a number of webinars during the year and defer the 40th Anniversary Symposium to June 2021. The college later offered the opportunity of a monthly webinar through January to June which would afford a focus on each of our specialties. Each webinar was agreed to have a Culture & Heritage trail, facilitated by Ms Harriet Wheelock and ‘The Vintage Pathologists’. We proposed to address Pathology contribution to health care delivery in the pandemic, issues considered by Faculty, engage with trainees, research and developments and professions working with pathologists.

Webinars

The first webinar was planned for Pathology week ‘Pandemic Pathology – the Learning’ and held on Thursday evening November 5th 5-7pm.

“A total of 85 participants attended the first Faculty webinar”

Through early 2021 we will host a Thursday evening webinar January 14th, February 4th (to coincide with the AGM), March 11th, April 15th, May 13th and host the 40th Anniversary Symposium on June 10th. The themes will include ‘Microbiology Matters-addressing Pandemic Problems’, Forensic Pathology, Transfusion, Histopathology and trainees.

Faculty AGM

The AGM is required to be held by end February under standing orders and will be aligned with the February webinar. Applications for New Fellows will be proposed to the credential committee sufficiently in advance to agree at Faculty Board and invite to the AGM followed by an admittance ceremony at the June 40th Anniversary Symposium.

Faculty 40th Anniversary Symposium

This will be held on 10 June in the hope of blended limited in-person attendance and a virtual webinar to celebrate the occasion. The academic presentations will be complimented by the Culture and Heritage trail with a session devoted to the history of the Faculty and the poster and ‘Rapid Fire session’ for trainees. Proposals for Honorary Fellowships will be with a view to awarding at the 40th Anniversary Symposium, together with the Faculty Awards and medals.

While webinars will be free to view, the committee will consider financing of the 40th Anniversary Symposium.

Professional Competence

The purpose of the department is to develop and maintain the highest possible standards in relation to the following services that we provide on behalf of RCPI's constituent Training Bodies:

- Management and delivery of 11 Professional Competence Schemes (PCS)
- Management of the CPD Event Approval Process

Our Clinical Leads are the Director of Professional Competence and the Clinical Lead for CPD Event Approval. We work closely with the Deans and Chairs of RCPI's Training Bodies, the Medical Council and international CPD Organisations in continuously improving the standards of our services. We also work closely with the RCPI Education and Quality Committee and CPD Organisers in the delivery of our services.

Summary of Key Activities in 2019 – 2020

Annual Verification Process

The Annual Verification Process was undertaken for the 2018/19 PCS year between September 2019 and March 2020. A random selection of 2% of all Scheme participants plus a further 2% of those who had not met requirements for 2018/19, were chosen from each of RCPI's 11 Schemes which equated to an overall total of 164 participants for review. In addition, 30 doctors who failed to complete their corrective actions in previous years were automatically included in the Verification Process, resulting in a total of 188 doctors to be reviewed. 13 doctors from the Faculty's Specialist Division Scheme were selected and included in the process. Detailed administrator reviews were conducted online with a view to preparing constructive advice for the relevant doctors. Pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for a few Clinician Reviewers to complete their reviews, so the Verification Process was deferred until September 2020. The outstanding Clinician Reviews were completed by November 2020 and results were issued to doctors in early December 2020.

As agreed with the Medical Council, due to COVID-19, Training Bodies will not carry out a Verification Process on the 2019 – 2020 PCS year. As instructed by the Medical Council, an additional annotation was added to all Statements issued to indicate that due to COVID-19, there were extenuating circumstances which prevented doctors from engaging in and recording the required CPD and Audit activities for the 2019/20 Scheme year.

Provision of Professional Development Activities

The Faculty of Public Health Medicine, in collaboration with RCPI's Education Development Department, continues to develop new and innovative lifelong learning and professional development opportunities which reflect emerging health system needs and directly support physicians. A total of 526 hours of educational activities was provided by the Faculty and RCPI's Education Development Department between 1 May 2019 and 30 April 2020.

CPD Research Studies

We conduct year on year research regarding CPD and PCS outcomes in order to identify areas of good practice, barriers preventing it and the support which would help doctors fulfil their PCS requirements. It also provides us with a greater understanding of the educational needs of our participants. In addition, we conducted two recent research projects including a survey of all RCPI participants in 2018 in order to obtain feedback on their PCS experience including their attitudes, perceived benefits, barriers to participating in the legally required Continuing Professional Development Schemes along with their recommendations to

improve the process. We also conducted anonymised in-depth telephone interviews with a representative sample of doctors who had not met their PCS requirements.

Medical Council

PCS and COVID-19

In response to COVID-19, the Medical Council confirmed that they would not monitor compliance with maintenance of professional competence for the 2019/20 Scheme year. This meant that doctors were not required to make a declaration about their maintenance of professional competence when retaining their registration with the Medical Council in 2020. Postgraduate Training Bodies are also not required to verify or audit doctors' professional competence records for the 2019 – 2020 Scheme year.

The Medical Council also confirmed that for the 2020/21 Scheme year, the following will apply:

- The annual Clinical/Practice Audit requirement has been removed.
- Doctors are only required to record 25 CPD credits instead of the usual 50 credits. The other 25 credits will be considered as met arising from increased learning by doctors during COVID-19.
- Of the 25 credits that must be recorded, doctors are permitted to record these credits in any CPD category and CPD requirements for each category will not apply.

Annual Reporting

A Qualitative Report outlining the activity and governance from the 2019/20 year for the Faculty's Specialist Division Scheme was submitted to the Medical Council at the end of June 2020. A Quantitative Report on required Key Performance Indicators (KPI) was also submitted on behalf of the Faculty. The KPIs included the number enrolled, number who recorded zero credits, number of verifications completed, number of educational activities provided by the PGTB, number of activities recognised by the PGTB, number of hours of activities provided by the PGTB. A progress report on the 19/20 Action Plan for RCPI's eleven Schemes was also submitted at the end of June 2020.

CPD Event Approval

RCPI facilitates a process of reviewing and accrediting external activities provided by both RCPI and other individuals or bodies for the purpose of awarding CPD credits.

Outlined below is a summary of activity for the period 1 December 2019 to 30 November 2020:

Type	Applications Approved	Credits Allowed
RCPI	129	975
Non RCPI	342	1290
TOTAL	471	2265

The Professional Competence Department welcomes feedback from all our PCS participants in order to identify areas of good practice, barriers preventing it and recommendations to improve the process. We are happy to help with any queries relating to CPD.

Income and expenditure

General

A surplus of €44,538 was generated for the 12 months to end June 2020. This is €10,777 (19%) lower than last year's surplus of €55,316.

Income

Total Income (excluding investment income) for the year was €194,204. This has decreased by €3,605 (2%) on last year and is mainly due to a decrease in Event Sponsorship income.

Subscription and Admission Fee

Receipts from Subscriptions were €64,550 in 2019-20 versus €65,230 in 2018-19, a decrease of €680 (1%) on last year. Admission receipts were €3,625 in 2019-20 versus €1,000 in 2018-19. In 2019-20, 77% of Fellows paid their subscriptions. In 2018-19, 80% of Fellows paid their subscriptions.

Event Income Fee and Sponsorship

Event fee income for 2019-20 was €6,888, a decrease of €662 (9%) versus 2018-19. Sponsorship income €10,000 in 2019-20 versus €18,500 in 2018-19.

HSE Grant Income

This relates to the SLA to deliver training. The amount of €109,141 is the proportion of the grant relating to the Faculty to cover cost of overheads and administration running costs. This has increased by €3,612 when compared to 2018-19. In line with this increase, the overhead recharge from the College has increased by €516 and wages and salaries have increased by €2,919.

Historically the loss for the Faculty has been capped at €6,800 and the College absorbed the remainder of the overhead. The overhead absorbed by College in 2019-20 was €28,328

In 2019-20, the overall HSE SLA amounted to €5M. This is calculated on the basis of a per capita element and a structural funding element. The amount received from the HSE has remained static for the last five years despite an increase in the number of trainees.

Investments

Investments held by the College at the end of June 2020 were €8,069,111 of which €126,754 was apportioned to the Faculty. The Faculty investments have held their value when compared to 2018-19.

Costs

Costs are categorized as follows:

- Direct costs attributed to specific projects/ events
- Indirect Costs (staffing and administration)
- Overhead recharge (rent, insurance, light, heat, etc, and to cover provision of the services of Finance, IT and HR)

Direct Costs total €27,014, an increase of €3,008 on last year, mainly attributable to subscription for the International Collaboration on Cancer Reporting. Indirect Costs total €39,828, a decrease of €3,696 on last year mainly due to a decrease in wages and salaries.

Travel and accommodation increased by €1,573 in 2018-19. Miscellaneous costs decreased due to lower catering and meeting costs in 2018-19. Overhead recharge of €77,278 has been charged to the Faculty of Pathology accounts for 2018-19 (€79,706 in 2017/2018).

Governance

Faculty Board

The Faculty is governed by the Board, the Chair of which is the Dean of the Faculty. With the pandemic, the Board convened virtually on Zoom from 22nd April.

Board Meetings 2020:

22nd January 2020 – RCPI, Kildare Street
 22nd April 2020 – Virtual Meeting
 10th June 2020 – Virtual Meeting
 16th September 2020 – Virtual Meeting
 11th November 2020 – Virtual Meeting

Board Members

Prof Louise Burke	Dean
Dr Ronan Desmond	Honorary Secretary
Dr Maeve Doyle	Director of Education and Training
Dr Deirbhile Keady	Honorary Treasurer
Dr Ken Mills	RCPATH Northern Ireland (Observer)
Prof Jo Martin, Dr Mike Osborn	President of the Royal College of Pathologists, UK (Observer)
Dr Karen Burns	Fellow
Dr Shari Srinivasan	Fellow
Prof Aurelie Fabre	Fellow
Dr Clive Kilgallen	Fellow
Prof Rob Landers	Fellow
Dr Joan Power	Fellow
Dr Linda Mulligan	Fellow
Prof Mary Keogan	Fellow
Dr Cynthia Heffron	Fellow
Dr Marie Staunton	Fellow
Dr Shane Brennan	Trainee Representative
Dr Muiris O'Ceidigh	Lay Member
Ms Terry Prone	Lay Member

External

The Faculty has ongoing links with a number of external committees and other entities, including:

- Joint working groups on Irish Laboratory accreditation
- International Liaison of Pathology Presidents
- Union Européenne Des Médecins Spécialistes (UEMS) Laboratory Medicine section & Section of Pathology
- National Cancer Control Programme
- Irish Haematology Society
- Academy of Clinical Science and Laboratory Medicine
- Irish Society of Clinical Microbiologists
- MedLIS (National Medical Laboratory Information System)
- International Collaboration on Cancer

Administration

Key personnel in RCPI who conducted work on behalf of the Faculty during 2020-21:

Faculty	Darragh Whelan	01 4853 461 pathology@rcpi.ie darraghwhelan@rcpi.ie
Training	Lauren Kerchner	01 8639 712 hst@rcpi.ie laurenkerchner@rcpi.ie
Professional Competence	Deirdre Donegan	01 8639 739 professionalcompetence@rcpi.ie deirdredonegan@rcpi.ie
Accreditation	Siobhán Kearns Georgina Farr	01 8639 700 siobhankearns@rcpi.ie
Conferences and Events	Shane Walshe Kerry McArdle	01 8639 794 conferences@rcpi.ie
Postgraduate Training & Education	Leah O'Toole/ Colm Small Ciara Buckley/ Maria Golden	01 8639 700 college@rcpi.ie