

IBMS in Scotland 2017 AGM

By Dr Paula McDonald

There were 68 attendees from across a range of backgrounds and parts of Scotland – even an attendee from Barrow in Furness. Attendees ranged from students undertaking Biomedical Science degrees, to experienced laboratory managers and lecturers.

David Wilson, Chair IBMS in Scotland, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for giving up their day for what he hoped would be a thought provoking day of speakers. He outlined the programme for the day and how appropriate it was to concentrate on 'Change is the only Constant' within biomedical and healthcare science given the demands of accreditation to ISO 15189, the changing landscape of shared services and regionalisation and emerging technologies.

Ian Sturdess, President of the IBMS, thanked the Region for inviting him to the meeting. As Chair of the first session he introduced Allan Wilson. Allan is Scottish Pathology Network (SPAN) Scientific Manager and is the Pathology Laboratory Manager at Monklands Hospital, NHS Lanarkshire. In 2015 he received the award of honorary fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists, he is only the second biomedical scientist in the UK to receive the accolade. He earned the recognition for his national work relating to cytology.

Allan gave a detailed presentation: Changing roles of Biomedical Scientists, describing advanced practice for Biomedical Scientists, drivers for the change in role, challenges, opportunities and the future all underpinned with case studies from Biomedical Scientists in the process of extending their practice. Some of the drivers identified were reconfiguration of services, shortages of medical staff, shrinking financial resources and advances in technology.

He described changes that were taking place across disciplines with changes in histopathology well embedded and other disciplines looking at clinical scientist roles. Case studies fleshed out the real stories of biomedical scientists who had seen gaps in services or naturally taken on roles that had been under resourced to add value to their services.

He stressed the importance of maintaining access to advanced roles once they had been created. Allan summed up saying Biomedical Scientists have a wealth of knowledge and expertise, they add value to the diagnostic/clinical service and can be used to enhance the capacity of the existing health workforce to ensure a quality service for patients now and in the future.

Ian Sturdess introduced the next two speakers who were to debate the proposition that Accreditation: Added value for laboratories. Proposing the argument was Eric Martindale, retired Microbiology Laboratory Manager at NHS greater Glasgow and Clyde, who continues work as a UKAS Technical Assessor.

Opposing the argument was Dr Paula McDonald, Quality Manager for Blood Sciences Laboratory, NHS Tayside. The Chair noted that Paula had worked in war zones, the foothills of the Himalayas and the NHS, with the NHS being the most challenging. She has been a Quality Manager for a year. Eric opened the discussion advising the audience that he had gathered together comments to UKAS from laboratories regarding their positive experience of accreditation.

The arguments presented stimulated much audience participation with good points made by both sides. Paula focussed on the additional time and costs incurred in trying to bring about new and improved ways of operating and whether these were strictly necessary. The chair offered an

opportunity for comments and thoughts from the audience before taking a show of hands for the proposition – nearly everyone, and the opposition – three. Eric and Paula agreed to disagree and amicably shook hands. The Chair thanked the protagonists and audience for an engaging and thought-provoking discussion.

The business of the AGM was conducted – 50 year medals were presented to Richard Webber and Ian (John) Cowie. The Chair read the citations and President presented the medals.

David Wilson Chaired the afternoon session and started by introducing Dr Kate Cruschieri, she is the Director Scottish HPV Reference Lab, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and gave an update: What next for HPV associated screening and disease management?

The presentation described that infection with papilloma virus is high, however not all cases of high risk HPV infection in women convert to CIN 3 or cervical cancer. This is due to 'non-clearance' of the virus and factors influencing this were outlined. All of this affects the way HPV is screened for in women and the burden of non-cervical HPV is increasing. In 2016, the UK National Screening Committee recommended HPV test as the primary screening test in the national Cervical Cancer Screening Programme.

Dr Cuschieri outlined the methods and platforms available to laboratories and the pilot algorithm being used in six sentinel sites in England. She outlined some of the ways that the algorithm could be enhanced to reduce 'noise' and improve the sensitivity of the screening programme. Rounding off the presentation Dr Cuschieri alluded to the changes that HPV vaccination of 12-13 year old school girls will have on the clinical performance of HPV testing in the future and then even given these advances, the requirement for "next generation" of HPV tests is already pressing.

David Wilson introduced the final speaker of the meeting, Jill Rodney, the Chief Executive of the IBMS. Jill advised the meeting that they were going to hear about the draft proposed strategy of the IBMS which was still due for consideration by the Council. It is to be discussed before the end of the year. Jill described the timeline for the development of the strategy, from early 2010 up to now, and that the strategy was underpinned by the mission, values and vision of the IBMS.

The membership of the IBMS had been consulted about the strategy and three themes had emerged: Influence and Engagement for Members; Knowledge, Expertise and Competence; Organisation and Governance Infrastructure.

Jill outlined in detail how these issues will be addressed including wider engagement and raising the profile of Biomedical Science and the work of Biomedical Scientists. The work to review current qualifications for fitness for purpose and introducing new qualifications were required. Also having an organisation and governance strategy that is live and relevant for members. Jill ended by advising that IBMS will work on delivering on the strategy outlined. David thanked Jill for her detailed explanation of the development of the strategy.

The final part of the meeting was to present the poster award for innovative research or project work. Five posters had been submitted and the President selected the poster submitted by Stephen McDonald and team from Furness General Hospital for a poster entitled 'The use of Becton Dickinson rapid serum tubes to improve turnaround times', describing work with industry and clinical colleagues to improve in-lab turnaround times. Stephen received a £100 cheque from the Chair of the Committee.

David Wilson thanked all the speakers for a thought provoking day and wished everyone a safe journey home.