

National Pathology Programme Newsletter - April 2023

Welcome to our Newsletter!

The Newsletter is quarterly and keeps you updated with our recent work, achievements, and future plans.

In this edition: Updates on the Programme workstreams
An article on the new Pathology dashboard/SharePoint page
APT Group meeting update
Focus on Dr Muhammad Babar Aslam
Upcoming Events

Programme Background:

The National Pathology Programme is a strategic body in Wales sitting within the NHS Wales Health Collaborative, which is in turn hosted by Public Health Wales. Its remit is to work with health boards and trusts across the Wales to support the development of high quality, effective and sustainable pathology services. Priority areas for improvement that are the focus of the National Programme were originally identified in the *Pathology Statement of Intent (2019)* and current work is aligned with the *Diagnostics Recovery and Transformation Strategy for Wales (2022 – 2025)* document which is due to be published.

Updates on the key areas of our work:

Workforce, Training and Education

Work has continued with the Pathology Workforce and Education Group (PWEG) on different areas to enable improvement. A strategy paper on Pathology workforce sustainability, training and education is being developed by the Programme in collaboration with the PWEG. The paper will include a description of the initiatives that have been undertaken and will make further recommendations for other improvement areas in the future. The Programme has been continuing its discussions with the PWEG about a possible 'virtual' academy for laboratory medicine as a shared repository for training and education resources.

Quality Assurance

The Pathology Quality Assurance and Regulatory Compliance Group continues to act as an important forum for sharing best practice and experience between Pathology services, supporting quality improvement across the system. In recent weeks work has commenced to develop Blood Sciences metrics to sit alongside Cellular Pathology data, which is now available for all through the newly created National Pathology Programme SharePoint site. All of this information will be important going forward

to provide benchmarking opportunities between Health Boards, as well as allowing data collation of the quality and performance of our services here in Wales to provide assurance to NHS Wales and Welsh Government through the National Pathology Board. This group have also recently been examining the changes to medical devices regulations to determine what effects these changes will have on service delivery across the country and how they can be managed. The group is also working on service transition arrangements for the revised UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service) ISO15189:2022 standard, which has replaced the 2012 iteration as the standard against which laboratories achieve accreditation.

Point of Care Testing

The National Pathology Programme Point of Care testing workstream has developed a proposal for a National Point of Care Testing Service which has recently been approved by the National Diagnostic Board. This proposal describes a hybrid model of National delivery with governance and clinical oversight being provided by a National Board, but with operational delivery remaining within individual Health Boards across Wales. Next steps are for the National Point of Care Strategy Group to provide further detail on the composition of a National Board and the means by which it can function to facilitate service improvements across the country and support post-COVID restoration and recovery activities.

Pathology Service Collaboration/Regionalisation

The first Pathology Scoping Group meeting has taken place to discuss the options for regionalisation. The group will review previous documentation and suggested options and will make recommendations to the Regional Pathology Steering Group as required. Site visits are to take place and the group is to hold a meeting/workshop to discuss operational plans for any considered option. Meetings will be held monthly with representation from all relevant stakeholders and updates will be communicated as work progresses.

Business Intelligence

A full and comprehensive update on developments with regards to business intelligence has been provided by Rhydian Owen. This can be found below.

Digital Cellular Pathology

Following feedback from the Collaborative Executive Group (CEG) in February, the Programme is continuing to work with Cellular Pathology colleagues to update the Business Justification Case (BJC) and we are working towards submitting the Digital Priorities Investment Fund (DPIF) proposal to Welsh Government in April. Following on from Dr Muhammad Aslam's report in our last newsletter, we are delighted to announce that Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB, Hywel Dda UHB and Cardiff & Vale UHB are also now part of the Ibex AI Project. In addition to this, from 1st April 2023 the Ibex AI Project will form part of the Digital Cellular Pathology Project, following a transfer from SBRI. SBRI have been instrumental in progressing with this Project and we thank them for their hard work.

Coming Up...

Anatomical Pathology Technologist (APT) / Mortuary Workforce Group

The National Pathology Programme has been in discussion with colleagues across NHS Wales and within Welsh Government regarding how our Mortuary workforce can be better supported on a national level. To this end, the former Human Tissue Authority (HTA) Group is to be relaunched in the coming weeks to become a forum dealing with professional and operational matters pertinent to the Anatomical Pathology Technologist (APT) and Support Worker workforce, who deliver such important services as part of the bereavement pathways within individual Health Boards. Cellular Pathology Operational Manager Scott Gable has agreed to Chair this important new group which will link into the National Pathology Governance structure once the new Terms of Reference have been agreed.

Pathology Business Intelligence Update: Cellular Pathology Dashboard

by **Rhydian Owen**

Demand & Capacity Improvement Manager, rhydian.owen3@wales.nhs.uk

Delivery Unit

Individual cellular pathology services monitor how their service is performing using different manual and electronic tools to keep track of key metrics.

A pan-UHB view of these metrics is also needed to help the National Pathology Programme and UHBs plan at a regional and national level. Working with the Delivery Unit, a cellular pathology dashboard is being created to provide this business intelligence.

It will be housed in a Pathology SharePoint accessible to all UHBs, which will provide key data and information on different pathology disciplines for NHS Wales' pathology community.

PROGRESS SO FAR: CELLULAR PATHOLOGY DASHBOARD

- An initial version of the dashboard has been produced using LIMS data provided by UHBs. The graphs produced by the dashboard have been shared with UHBs and are available to view via the link below.
https://nhs.wales365.sharepoint.com/sites/SBU_NHSDU_Pathology/SitePages/Cellular-Pathology---State-of-the-Nation.aspx
- A final version of the dashboard is currently being produced which can be refreshed regularly using LIMS data from DHCW. It will provide a view of the following key metrics at UHB regional and national level:
 - Number of specimens received & reported
 - Average turnaround times and proportion of specimens processed within a target number of days
 - Specimen backlog levels
 - Specimens received and reported each day of the week.

- The data will also be viewable by priority group (Routine, Urgent, Suspected Cancer) and by individual tumour/specimen site.

Data going back to 2018 will be viewable, giving a sense of how demand and capacity across cellular pathology services has changed over time as well as how much pressure services are currently experiencing.

CAPACITY & DEMAND

The information provided by the dashboard can also be used to show the difference between the demand placed on, and the capacity of, individual cellular pathology services.

The size of this 'capacity gap' varies over time. For example, as at mid-2022 the number of specimens processed would have needed to be increased by an additional c.20%-25% in the South West/Mid region in order to meet turnaround target times and avoid increasing backlog levels. At that time, this 'capacity gap' figure was slightly lower in the North region (c.20%) but greater in the South East (c.40%).

The size of this capacity gap varies over time as demand and capacity in different services changes. For example, the increased outsourcing of cellular pathology lab work by UHBs in the South East during late 2022 is likely to have increased their capacity, thus reducing the capacity gap.

The information from the cellular pathology dashboard, and capacity/demand information, can support decision makers to introduce measures to increase services' capacity and productivity, such as making greater use of digital pathology, or creating integrated regional services.

FUTURE PLANS

Both the Pathology SharePoint and the Cellular Pathology Dashboard should be available by the end of May. Work is also underway to explore whether enhanced regional/national business intelligence and capacity/demand information can be produced for other pathology disciplines. Beyond pathology, similar work is also underway in other diagnostic areas (e.g. endoscopy and imaging).

Focus On...



I am Dr. Muhammad Babar Aslam, MBBS, FRCPATH, a consultant pathologist and clinical director in North Wales diagnostic and specialist clinical services. I joined East Lancashire NHS as a consultant pathologist in 2006 where I was actively involved in various management roles and a key individual in creating an innovative way of working in pathology and the consolidation of teams after the merging of Blackburn and Burnley departments. I joined North Wales NHS in 2015 to lead the surgical pathology and digital pathology implementation project and support a new department after merging three DGH laboratories. Currently I am working as a clinical director for North Wales diagnostic and specialist clinical services, including radiology, pathology, audiology, medical physics and neurophysiology. My key interests include service improvement, teaching, innovation, digitisation with AI usage, and development of clinical leadership.

My clinical service provision is based around patient centred service development that must be clinically led and managerially supported. To manage this vision I have utilised various skills gained through both experience and a management qualification (Exec MBA healthcare achieved from Nottingham

university). The key experience I have gained is in assessing services using various tools such as SWOT analysis, efficient and robust communication with stakeholders, and reviewing the entire service as a whole and analysing the structure with best option appraisal in various situations in cytology, histopathology and mortuary services. However, I have also gained experience in consolidating services beyond cellular pathology, including blood sciences and radiology, in my current role as director of North Wales diagnostic and specialist clinical services. I have a special interest in using digital and AI platforms to improve the services across all the specialities and have led innovative projects supporting the key project management principles, such as Prostate AI deployment which is expanding across the Wales. I have been appointed as National Clinical Digital Lead in pathology for Wales to support the digital pathology and computation pathology foundation in Wales, and to make a stronger national service by innovating and bringing technology to improve patient services across Wales. I am looking forward to working with various stakeholders to support our national digital pathology project.

The Programme team:

Alan Deacon National Pathology Programme Lead

Adam Christian Clinical Lead

Caity Thomas Senior Project Manager, focussing on Digital Cellular Pathology

Jane Long Project Manager

Leanne Barker Senior Project Support Officer

Lynda Ferron Senior Project Manager

Joanne Everett Senior Project Support Officer

... and our new recruit:

Lisa McCutcheon Project Manager. Lisa joined the National Pathology team in February 2023. She will be concentrating on two workstreams, including our Communication Strategy and the Quality and Regulatory Compliance.

Pathology Events:

17th – 20th April – Microbiology Society Annual Conference

Venue: Birmingham; there is a fee for registration and this is reduced for members of the 'Microbiology Society'.

There are scientific symposia, workshops, fora, professional development sessions and lectures spread across 4 days. For more information and to register for the event visit:

[Annual Conference 2023 | Microbiology Society](#)

11th May – Policy Forum for Wales Online Keynote Conference

Venue: Online event; charges apply for attendance and to access the transcripts/ presentations after the event. There is an online booking form on the website for registration.

The day's conference will examine the next steps in digital healthcare with a range of speakers throughout the day covering topics such as service transformation, the current digital landscape and next steps, and patient records. For further information and to book onto the conference visit:

[Westminster Forum Projects | Next steps for digital health and health data use in Wales \(policyforumforwales.co.uk\)](https://www.westminsterforumforwales.co.uk)

23rd May - International Sarcoma Symposium

Venue: Milton Keynes; registration is free but limited spaces are available.

The Wales Cancer Network are organising an international symposium sponsored by Sarcoma UK to discuss personalised epigenetic therapies. If anyone from your team is interested in joining us can they please see the programme and register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/personalised-epigenetic-therapies-for-sarcoma-tickets-576449926247>

23rd – 24th May – Genomics and Precision Medicine Expo

Venue: ExCel, London; attendance is free for registered healthcare professionals as well as individuals working in the field of genomics and precision medicine. Please visit the website to complete the registration form and receive your pass to the event.

The event features a number of talks and discussions around the latest advancements in genome sequencing and genomics testing, as well as the opportunity to connect with like-minded peers across patient care and science. For a full programme and to register for the event please visit: [Genomics and Precision Medicine Expo \(oncologyprofessionalcare.co.uk\)](https://www.oncologyprofessionalcare.co.uk)

23rd June & 29th June - MediWales Connects Conference 2023:

Venue: Cardiff

On Thursday 29th June 2023, NHS colleagues from across Wales, local companies, and the wider industry sector will come together to share clinical innovation in practice to improve patient outcomes. The event includes keynote presentations, CPD approved seminars, workshops, and an exhibition. Whether you're interested in attending, exhibiting, or sponsorship, there are plenty of ways to get involved with MediWales Connects Conference 2023.

Contact [Ella](#) for further information, or visit the [Connects website](#) to find out more.

27th - 29th June - Liverpool Pathology 2023

Venue: University of Liverpool; registration is necessary and BDIAP Bursaries are available (visit the website for details).

The event features a mixture of guest lectures, workshops, symposia, and research discussions spread over three days. A full outline of the programme can be found on the website:

[Liverpool Pathology 2023 | BDIAP](https://www.liverpool-pathology.co.uk)

Contact us:

Please email NHSWHC.National.Pathology.Programmes@wales.nhs.uk if you would like:

- to be added to the circulation list for our newsletter
 - to provide feedback or contributions
 - opportunities to engage with the work of the Programme
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Website: We will be updating our pages on the NHS Wales Collaborative website with new content soon.

Next edition – July 2023