

Celebrating International Pathology Day 2025

The International team reports on International Pathology Day.

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International Pathology Day virtual conference was themed the ‘Global Pathology Workforce’, hosted in partnership with and sponsored by the British Society for Haematology and Diagnexia. Read our roundup of the event here.

The President’s opening address

The President opened the virtual International Pathology Day conference by welcoming participants from around the globe. Dr Bernie Croal highlighted a key issue beginning to define his presidency: the growing concerns around the pathology workforce. "We must continue to shine a light on the challenges faced by pathologists in the UK and worldwide," he said, stressing the importance of collaboration with international partners to address shared concerns.

This opening address set the tone for the day’s discussions, which explored global workforce challenges, innovative strategies and the role of technology in shaping the future of pathology.

“I’m very pleased to speak at this International Pathology Day about a matter that is beginning to define my presidency – that of concerns around pathology workforce. I believe that we must continue to highlight the challenges faced by pathologists in the UK and worldwide, and we are very happy to work with international partners and stakeholders to highlight areas of common concern.”



DR BERNIE CROAL

President

In conversation with Jim Campbell, Director of the Health Workforce Department at the World Health Organization (WHO)

The morning sessions opened with a compelling session with our keynote speaker Jim Campbell, Director of Health Workforce, WHO, in conversation with Professor Peter Johnston, Vice President for Workforce and Corporate Engagement at the College. Their discussion explored the evolving role of the pathology workforce in global healthcare and the urgent need for collective action.

Mr Campbell reflected on progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), noting that, while there have been gains in maternal and child health and infectious disease control, global progress is not on track to achieve the SDGs. With just 5 years left to achieve the 2030 targets, he asked: What actions are needed to accelerate progress and strengthen health systems worldwide? Professor Johnston added that, in this era of polycrises, countries face mounting demands as they strive for universal health coverage. This raised another critical question: What key issues must nations consider when developing and managing their health and care workforce?

The WHO has been monitoring health workforce trends through its National Health Workforce Accounts, but Mr Campbell acknowledged the challenges in counting pathology personnel globally. How can we overcome these gaps and convince governments of the value of investing in pathology, given its vital role in both clinical care and public health?

Education and retention emerged as pressing concerns: How do we address shortages, lifelong learning, planning and pay disparities across specialties? Opportunities for growth and innovation in the next decade were also discussed: What impact will AI and digital technologies have on the pathology workforce – will they ease workloads or create new challenges? Finally, we heard a call to action: the College and all of our professional networks were challenged to help WHO put workforce data into the public domain.

Navigating AI in pathology education: Barriers, competencies and best practices

We then heard from Junior Professor Dr Roman David Bülow about how the rapid integration of AI into pathology is transforming diagnostic workflows and training, requiring educators to prepare trainees for an AI-augmented future while preserving essential human judgment. Dr

Bülow's presentation explored the evolving landscape of AI education in medicine, with particular focus on pathology's unique challenges and opportunities.

Central to the discussion were critical concerns about de-skilling and automation bias – phenomena that threaten to erode diagnostic capabilities and professional autonomy, e.g. through overreliance on algorithmic tools. The presentation explored strategies that support AI adoption while preserving human expertise. This includes examining governance models for human–AI collaboration and training methodologies that maintain interpretive skills despite increasing automation.

Best practice from early adopters offers valuable insights, revealing how successful programmes integrate interdisciplinary teaching models and staged implementation approaches while maintaining pathologists' supervisory roles. The goal remains clear: enhancing diagnostic efficiency through technology while safeguarding the clinical judgment and ethical accountability that define quality patient care.

Bridging, building, boosting resources

The third talk, by Dr Thinn Hlaing, Consultant Chemical Pathologist and Country Director, Myanmar, shared a decade-long journey of the Myanmar–UK health partnership, a story of bridging systems, building capacity and strengthening resilience in pathology and laboratory medicine. The presentation explored how the partnership began, how progress was sustained after the military coup in Myanmar and the lessons learned. The strength of any healthcare system begins with its diagnostic capacity, Dr Hlaing noted, highlighting the global shortage of trained pathology professionals.

The Myanmar–UK health partnership has produced a digital learning platform and tailored training programmes to empower biomedical scientists in Myanmar, improving diagnostic quality, laboratory safety and confidence in practice. What started as a response to resource limitations has evolved into a sustainable model of knowledge exchange, proving that, when expertise is shared and trust is built, stronger laboratories and a more equitable future for patients can emerge.

Building pathology capacity in East, Central and Southern Africa

Dr Shahin Sayed, Associate Professor at the Department of Pathology, Aga Khan University Hospital, Nairobi, Kenya, highlighted how, at current training rates, countries in East, Central and Southern Africa would need over 400 years to match pathologist-to-population ratios seen in

high-income nations.

The College of Pathologists of East, Central and Southern Africa was established to tackle this gap by harmonising postgraduate curricula, accreditation and examinations, creating a fellowship programme recognised across multiple countries. This approach improves training quality and ensures portability of qualifications so specialists can work where they're most needed.

Challenges remaining include financial sustainability, uneven national buy-in, political instability and weak diagnostic infrastructure. Yet, strong partnerships with universities, regional colleges and international societies including the College have enabled tailored fellowship curricula and short courses to be developed.

Dr Sayed reported that sustainable financing models, digital pathology networks and AI integration offer opportunities to strengthen efficiency and quality, accelerating progress toward a regionally integrated pathology workforce and closing the diagnostic gap across Africa.

Emerging trends and future technical directions in computational pathology

John Weldon, Director of Clinical AI at Deciphex, discussed how computational pathology is moving beyond single-modality analysis toward multimodal and conversational AI systems.

By integrating histology with clinical and molecular data, these approaches not only promise more personalised and accessible decision support, but also greater efficiency - an essential factor in addressing the worldwide shortage of pathology expertise. This talk highlighted key innovations and emphasised the vital role of pathologists in guiding their safe and effective adoption.

Lunchtime talk – the College's Workforce Strategy

Amy Johnson, Workforce and Engagement Manager at the College, introduced the College's Workforce Strategy. Pathology services are under increasing pressure from workforce shortages, rising workloads and ongoing challenges in recruitment and retention. In response, the College launched its first dedicated Workforce Strategy in January 2025, with the aim of securing a sustainable and resilient pathology workforce.

Recognising that pathology sits at the heart of healthcare, the strategy seeks to ensure services are appropriately resourced and supported to deliver the highest quality patient care. Guided by 6 strategic aims – gathering and reporting intelligence, engaging and influencing stakeholders, training the next generation, retaining the established workforce, reforming ways of working, and planning for contingencies – the College is taking a phased approach to implementation. Early efforts focus on strengthening workforce data through initiatives such as the enhanced Workforce Census and direct service surveys, alongside engagement with the NHS, government and specialty committees to drive progress.

Roundtable discussion – ‘The global pathology workforce: addressing emerging challenges and opportunities together’

The final activity of the conference was chaired by Professor Marta Cohen, Vice President for Learning. The roundtable panel included:

- Ms Elisabetta Zanon, CEO, European Cancer Organisation
- Dr Jan von der Thüsen, Deputy Head, Department of Pathology and Clinical Bioinformatics, Erasmus MC, Rotterdam, the Netherlands
- Professor Priyani Amarathunga, Professor in Pathology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Mr Russell Dacombe, Senior Research Associate, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK
- Professor Xavier Matias-Guiu, Professor and Chairman of Pathology, Hospital Universitari Arnau de Vilanova, University of Lleida, Spain, and President of the European Society of Pathology.

The roundtable panel responded to questions including:

- What are the future implications of current workforce shortages?
- What are the current implications of pathology workforce issues in cancer diagnosis?
- What is the role of the pathologist in the modern day?
- What is the current workforce situation of pathology in Sri Lanka?
- What are the advantages of expanding the numbers and knowledge of pathology assistants to balance workforce issues in Europe and LMICs?
- How will the recent drop in international aid spending impact the implementation and development of diagnostics in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)?

The discussions covered subjects such as workforce issues in oncology, burnout and retention, multidisciplinary working, and the roles of AI and digital pathology.

Replay all talks and the roundtable discussion

Visit our virtual resources page to replay [all talks and the roundtable discussion](#).

Announcing our poster competition winners

After lunch, Professor Cohen revealed the winners of this year's International Pathology Day poster competition. Join us in congratulating the 3 outstanding entries featured below!

View all the superb entries and the accompanying video at our [poster competition page](#).

A huge thank you to our judging panel – Professor Tahir Pillay, Professor Marta Cohen and John Weldon – for selecting the winners, who were:

- in first place, Waddah Ahmed, with a poster titled 'Deep learning for automated malaria parasite detection: A cross-dataset validation study'
- in second place, Marina Sass, with a poster titled 'Architectural patterns and AKTs expression in HGSOC and HRD status'
- in third place, Dr Stephanie Zhang and Dr Jeanne Boissiere, with a poster titled 'Case report – Malignant renal epithelioid angiomyolipoma'.

Undergraduate quiz for National Pathology Week & International Pathology Day

On Wednesday 12 November, we hosted a pathology-themed online quiz for undergraduates all over the world studying medicine, biomedical science or similar degrees.

Dr Matthew Clarke and Dr Reham Hassan led teams through 5 fun-filled rounds. Congratulations to the winning team, Dragon Path from Egypt. Team members included Amr Ewis Ragab Tamam, Abdelrahman Hassan Mohammed and Ahmed Rizk Nawar.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the British Society for Haematology and Diagnexia for kindly sponsoring the event, and to all our speakers, chairs, poster competition judges and participants.

Join us next year

On Wednesday 11 November 2026, we will explore 'the future of pathology in an era of personalised medicine'. Further details of the next virtual conference for International Pathology Day will be available in the summer.

Meet the author

THE INTERNATIONAL TEAM