

Introducing Professor Eric Kilpatrick, Chair of the Specialty Advisory Committee for Clinical Biochemistry

An introduction from the new Chair of the Clinical Biochemistry Specialty Advisory Committee

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Author: Professor Eric Kilpatrick

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Professor Eric Kilpatrick details his ambitions for his new role in the Committee, from developing national analytical performance specifications for tests to shaping best practices for laboratory–patient interactions.

I am privileged to succeed Dr Ian Godber as Chair of the Specialty Advisory Committee (SAC) for Clinical Biochemistry. Ian demitted office to take on the role of President of the Association for Laboratory Medicine, and I am fortunate that he and the Committee have ensured that my transition has been completely smooth.

Who am I?

I have followed a tortuous career journey, recently becoming a consultant in chemical pathology at Wythenshawe Hospital in Manchester, having previously spent 17 years as a consultant in Hull and then a total of 7 years as Division Chief in Doha.

Each post has been an enjoyable education. Along the way, I have held academic chairs in Hull and Cornell universities and several professional body positions, both nationally (including Ian's new role) and internationally.

Why apply to be a College SAC Chair?

I am a firm believer that we can shape our services with cogent arguments, even if some of my colleagues feel I can be naively positive in this regard. Firstly, though, I believe it is essential to have ideas and a clear vision, which, in relation to this post, means having a vision for the future development of our discipline in the UK.

It actually took some thought before I applied for the SAC Chair position. I knew that to do justice to such a role requires sufficient time, effort and commitment, and so would mean prioritising the work of the Committee over other potential uses of my time.

What ultimately convinced me was past experience, which told me, somewhat ironically, that it is often easier to implement meaningful change nationally than it is within our local organisations.

What am I hoping to achieve?

There are priorities that will require the Committee's input to help the College to respond to and shape any implementation of external initiatives. A current example of this includes the 10-year NHS plan, where uninformed execution in respect to pathology could otherwise adversely affect patient care.

However, there are also initiatives we can pursue ourselves to help develop services to meet our expectations and those of patients. Among these, initially I am hoping the SAC can, along with our other professional body colleagues, make progress in the following areas.

Develop nationally agreed analytical performance specifications for our most commonly requested tests

We are unusual in the UK in not having defined minimum analytical performance specifications (APSS) for our tests. Recent high-profile issues involving clinically inaccurate results just reinforces the importance of these being developed and agreed by the professional bodies. Having seen the advantages of using APSS first-hand when working within a US system, I am sure the UK could also benefit from their implementation.

Provide guidance on managing increasing demand for laboratory result interpretation

Inexorably rising test demand means it is becoming increasingly unsustainable to add interpretative comments to reports in the ways many laboratories have traditionally provided them. Reimagining how this demand can be prioritised and managed, particularly in an era of electronic connectivity, is part of evolving our clinical role.

Develop best practice for direct laboratory interaction with patients

Related to the last priority and perhaps more controversial, there may be an opportunity for laboratory staff to interact more closely with patients regarding the test results they now receive directly. Akin to a way that is already commonplace for other specialties, such as pharmacy, this would move the target for result interpretation interaction upstream.

Lastly, the SAC certainly does not have a monopoly in identifying important topics and ideas, so feel free to [contact us](#) if you think there are other national priorities in clinical biochemistry that require consideration.

Meet the author



PROFESSOR ERIC KILPATRICK

CHAIR, SAC FOR CLINICAL BIOCHEMISTRY