

# Training and Teaching in Laboratory IMD

## The Past, Present and Future

### The Past

In the past training in laboratory IMD was done in house on an ad hoc basis. The areas covered often varied from laboratory to laboratory depending on the range of tests offered. Trainees had the opportunity to go to external meetings in the UK and abroad although this depended on staffing levels in the department and the availability of funding. In the early 2000s it was clear that, based on projected retirements, we would not in the future have sufficient trained staff to maintain existing staffing levels. A case for pump priming funding for trainees was put to the Department of Health in 2004 by Professor Anne Green, along with proposals to fund and create a Metabolic Biochemistry Network. They agreed to give basic funding for a Network and to fully fund nine supernumerary Higher Specialist Trainees for 5 years to be trained in Paediatric & Metabolic Biochemistry. They also agreed funding for 3 years for trainers.

Initially funding was for a Lead Trainer at 0.4wte with three Regional Trainers at 0.4 wte. One of the trainers was also responsible for the content of the new MetBioNet website.

Trainees were appointed by interview as were the trainers. The trainers' initial job was to create a curriculum for Laboratory IMD which was put on the website. Joint annual meetings with the trainers, trainees and their local tutors were arranged and the trainers also met separately during the year. A system for annual assessments was established to ensure the trainees were getting the appropriate depth and range of laboratory and clinical knowledge of a wide variety of tests and disorders. Where necessary trainees were seconded to other IMD laboratories for some parts of their training. Funding was also available to ensure they could attend appropriate meetings. The trainers organised workshops and study days and also produced teaching modules and presentations which were put on the website. They also liaised with the trainees Regional Tutors and attended the ACB Education Committee meetings to help coordinate IMD training. The trainees also studied for the FRCPath examinations and were supported locally in that training.

Trainers also had a role ensuring that Pre-Registration Grade A trainees (and now STP trainees) have access to appropriate paediatric & metabolic training and in supplying the Royal College of Pathologists examiners with examination material

The initial trainer funding was extended for two more years to 2008 - but at a much reduced level funding. As a result the funding was lowered to 0.2wte for a lead trainer (Mick Henderson) and three trainers covering different areas. These included two Clinical Scientists (Lesley Tetlow & George Gray) and a lead Biomedical Scientist Trainer (Mark DeHora). Mark set up a BMS Training Group to coordinate and provide educational material and meetings for BMS staff in IMD laboratories. George Gray was also Content Webmaster for the website.

After the initial tranche of money for trainee funding, trainees were appointed mainly by 50/50 funding from the Work Development Council and the local NHS Trust.

## **The Present and Outcomes**

Since funding ended in 2008 trainer funding has had to be further reduced. Currently George Gray is funded at 0.1wte whilst the other trainers (Camilla Scott (lead trainer) Claire Hart & Jenny Watkinson (BMS Trainer)) are funded on an expenses basis.

It soon became clear that 3 years was usually sufficient for training so all trainees, after the initial tranche, were mostly employed on a 3 year basis. The trainees encountered no major problems in passing their FRCPATH examinations even though during training they worked mainly in a specialist area. This was in part down to the trainee's commitment to study and the supervisors organising secondments to adult training.

The trainers have reviewed the paediatric & IMD content of the STP and HSST curricula created under Modernising Scientific Careers and have advised accordingly.

They are also involved in co-ordinated IMD training for these trainees.

They have also produced articles for the Newsletters the Royal College of Pathologists, the ACB, BIMDG and the IBMS describing MetBioNet and its training programme.

The current training roles involve organising workshops and meetings to meet training needs in Inherited Metabolic Disease and to provide educational tools via the trainees section of the website to allow trainees to develop skills and knowledge through self learning.

Currently there is only one HST in training in Manchester although there are numerous band 7 biochemists that, whilst not in formal HST posts, are in training throughout the United Kingdom in Paediatric and IMD Biochemistry. Out of a total of 19 HSTs who entered and finished training twelve have remained in IMD laboratories and three are now working at consultant level in those labs. Seven have full MRCPATH membership and 12 have Part 1 Associate Membership. We have to date identified 20 clinical scientists in IMD laboratories who were not enrolled in the HST scheme but regard themselves as being in training.

The remit of the training group has now broadened and our annual meeting consist of trainers from other areas of IMD including clinicians, dieticians and the BIMDG. We see the group as now co-ordinating training for all staff within IMD services rather than solely HSTs.

## **The Future**

There has been no recurrent funding for trainers since 2008 and in the current financial climate is getting more difficult to obtain funding for trainees.

Currently MetBioNet is applying for Commissioning for the laboratory service and, if successful, training will be funded as part of the service.

## **Current Trainers**

Lead Trainer	Camilla Scott	Sheffield
Trainer	Claire Hart	Manchester
Trainer	Rachel Carling	GSST, London
BMS Trainer	Jenny Watkinson	Sheffield