

The Association of Clinical Pathologists

Spring 2005

acp News

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Who are you calling a Meer Pathologist?



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Anatomy for Beginners
Let's Play Fantasy Pension Funds!
SpRs and RITA
Olympic Games Athens 2004
Paediatric Pathology in the 21st Century

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Dr P Wilson

Secretariat

The Association of Clinical Pathologists

189 Dyke Road

Hove, East Sussex, BN3 1TL

Tel: 01273 775700

Fax: 01273 773303

e-mail: info@pathologists.org.uk

<http://www.pathologists.org.uk>

General Administrator

Ms A A Martin

Administrator – Finance

Miss T Moynan

Editorial Assistant

Miss J Rush

(Correspondence should be addressed to:
The Editor, Association of Clinical Pathologists,
189 Dyke Road, Hove,
East Sussex, BN3 1TL)

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Source of front cover "meerkat" picture taken by Dr Edward Penman – See *Cover Story* on page 5

Editorial

Dr M D Harris, Editor



Dr M D Harris is Editor of *acp News* and Consultant Histopathologist/Cytopathologist at Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

On Saturday 29th of January 2005 the official handover of the editorial reigns of *acp News* took place, starting in Peterborough with the mandatory paperwork, and then on to Stamford, Lincs, for the beer and curry ceremony. In this we were accompanied by a reader, who gathered the photographic evidence (Exhibit A). I would say *the* reader, but if you are reading this and you weren't there, then there must be at least two of you.

Life is full of challenges and, apart from anything else – the angst, the extra work and, yes, the honour – editing *acp News* is certainly going to be a challenge. As part of my preparation for the task, I asked Alison and Tess at ACP control for some back copies of *acp News*, as my own collection was incomplete due to the fact that I had left the



Exhibit A

ACP by mistake some years earlier. OK, that probably needs some further explanation, so let me just say that ACP and IAP look very similar and either the bank or I cancelled the wrong direct debit; it can easily happen.

One of the joys I came upon was Emyr's first editorial, in which I found he had already said most of the things I was intending to say. Firstly, and given the success of his editorial reign, reassuringly, he expressed his anxiety in following the high standard set by his predecessor; ditto to that. Secondly, he stated that there would be some changes, not because anything actually needed changing, but because he was not his predecessor and, necessarily, his style would be different. It's a bit like when Doctor Who metamorphoses into a completely different actor – the same role, but with a different face, body and personality.

Another feature of my predecessor's first editorial that I would echo wholeheartedly is the need for good material. It is all very well enjoying reading *acp News* for its coverage of topical issues with clarity and wit, but someone has got to actually write the stuff. The continued success of this publication depends upon you, the readership (now I am beginning to sound like my old headmaster). The ACP and *acp News* were established to

represent the views of pathologists "at the coal face". With that in mind, as well as (I hope) a continuation of the excellent copy from regular contributors, I would very much like to encourage readers who have not done

so previously to send in material, whether it be full-length pieces, shorter pieces suitable for printing as letters to the editor, interesting or amusing photographs, or just a good joke. For trainees, I am sure an article in *acp News* would be a handsome and impressive addition to your CV. They say that everybody has at least one book in

them, so 1200 to 1500 words is surely not too much to ask!

Reading through past copies of *acp News* – I must remember to ask someone why "acp" has always been in lower case – has been an eye-opener in itself. Recall the controversy over technical staff doing histology "cut up"? Remember the articles and letters written when CME/CPD and EQA were first conceived? And what about when laboratory accreditation was first mentioned? Did the world come to an end? Well it hasn't yet, although I guess there is still time. Who knows what the future holds? There are certainly as many "hot potatoes" as ever currently in the fire, and many more waiting to be dug up. But through it all *acp News* has been there; furthermore, as long as you keep writing, it will remain so for the years to come.

Although there are many constants, it is remarkable how some things have changed even over 14 years. It is fascinating to see the young faces of many of the now-established members on the yellowing pages. It is also heartening to see that some of our senior colleagues were even then writing in *acp News* as trainee members. It just proves what I have always said: be nice to your junior staff – your SHO, or even a medical student, may within your working lifetime become your

professor, and he or she may one day be interviewing you for a job.

Another change is in the passport-type photos of authors that accompany the articles. Even in preparing this, my first issue, experience has taught me that getting people to provide photos is sometimes a bit like getting blood out of a stone and, although some are forthcoming, many have to be teased out. But at least the modern approach is to show people smiling, laughing, or in some kind of dramatic pose. Looking back at the early nineties, everybody looked so serious, like those old black and white photos you see in the BMJ obituaries. Well, here in the "noughties", I think we should get a bit more adventurous. So, please send in your articles and also, if you think the world is not yet ready for your visage to be fully exposed in print, why not send me a funny one? Contributions by authors wearing Batman masks, or any rubber fetish gear for that matter, will be gratefully accepted and even given priority!

One of the most difficult aspects of editing a publication of this size is in knowing how much to apply a "house style" to matters of capitalisation and punctuation. The problem is that everyone has their own views – I mean, should it be "Professor of Pathology" or "professor of pathology"? Is it "OK" or "okay"? And what on earth (or is it Earth?) do you do with a semicolon? No one (rather than no-one) really knows, but everyone (definitely not every one) has an opinion. Such things can make me wake in a cold sweat at night and I suspect they will continue to do so for the next few years.

The problem is largely that language is a fluid thing and conventions of grammar are, to a large extent, a matter of convenience. Spelling, too, changes over the years; two words join as a compound hyphenated word, which eventually becomes one. Also, UK English is becoming Americanized by the back door due to US-orientated spell checkers. Probably the highest rate of evolution is in the use of punctuation. Look at any old book and you will find a plethora of commas all over the place, but the modern approach is to dispense with them unless they are really necessary in order to clarify what is written. I must confess to being a bit of a comma-addict myself, but in line with modern journalistic practice, I will try to control my urges. Also, I will take the BMJ approach of not capitalising any more than is absolutely necessary, so don't be offended if your prestigious job title appears in lower case. I will try not to over-edit what has originally been written, but where there is dispute I will refer to two sources, the excellent *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* by Lynne Truss and *The Economist Style Guide*. In continued disputes, the editor (not the Editor) will have the final say!



Dr J L Burton is Assistant Editor of acp News and Lecturer in Histopathology at the University of Sheffield

The more observant of you will have noticed a change to the cover. *AcP News* has always been (or for as long as I have record) the "news-sheet" of the ACP. Now, it's not that I have no regard for tradition, but sometimes things really do need bringing up to date. At the ACP Council meeting in January, I raised the matter and asked Council for its views on an alternative to "news-sheet". I had wondered about "quarterly magazine", or even just "magazine", but someone rightly said that they throw magazines away after reading them, which they don't do with *acp News*. "Journal"? No, that is what the *J Clin Path* is for. "Quarterly review"? Better, but not quite right. "Organ"? Don't even go there. "Bulletin"? The College would accuse us of copying them. "Periodical"? "Publication"? What about just "quarterly"? Things started to go downhill rapidly. The secretary of Council suggested having something different each time and see if anyone notices. "Drippings", "titbits", even "curetings". I began to feel a bit uneasy, I mean, who wants to be the editor of *acp News*, *Scratchings of the Association of Clinical Pathologists*? Not I!

And so, after much thought and taking into account the views of Council, I have decided to go for the safest option: why does it have to be anything? After all, *acp News* is what it is and it does what it says on the tin. What else is needed? And so, on the basis that less is sometimes more, that is what you have from henceforth; just plain old *acp News*. Now, I know that some will disagree with my decision; in fact, I know my predecessor is not convinced about it, but I will have to live with that. In three years time my successor can change it all back again if he or she wishes, but I doubt that will happen.

Other changes were going to be minor, on the basis that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. However, it is like when you start to pull at a loose thread; pretty soon the whole jumper is back to being a length of wool and you just have to knit a new one (a great metaphor for someone who can't knit). I was desperately keen to get in as many colour

photos as possible; after all, there are very few modern publications of this sort that have mostly black and white (or is it greyscale?) throughout. But *acp News* has a limited budget and we could only afford more colour if the number of pages were to be reduced. So, in discussion with our printers, Evolve, we looked at the layout and realised that the old format carried a lot of wasted space. It was clear that by adopting a more modern look we could make much more efficient use of space and, by doing so, get the same amount of material in on fewer pages, and thereby gain 16 full-colour pages. So, here is the new-look *acp News*: I sincerely hope you like it.

In addition, I have allowed myself one further small indulgence – an editor's column. Why? Because I can and what is the point in having privileges if you can't abuse them? Seriously, I would prefer to use the editorial itself as a form of commentary on the content of each issue and any concerns that may be

"What is the point in having privileges if you can't abuse them?"

raised. I hope if I am sufficiently provocative some of the readership may even be moved to write in and tell me why they disagree with me. All I ask is that you only do so if you are prepared to be published; if not, forever hold your peace!

One last point: the curetings (jokes and other amusements) section is a nightmare to keep track of. It is entirely possible that there will be duplication and I may well repeat jokes already printed in previous issues, as there is no way I can go through every past issue to check what has already been included. But isn't that intrinsic to the nature of jokes? Editorial policy (that is what my predecessor told me to say when I have just made something up) is that you should only write to tell me I have repeated a joke if you also send in a better one that has not previously been printed here.

In this issue

As you might have predicted, the Channel 4 series *Anatomy for Beginners* takes centre stage. This issue features two leading articles, the first by John Lee, co-presenter of the series and one of the few people who knows what is really under Gunther von Hagens' hat. The second is an appreciation by Julian Burton, assistant editor of *acp News*. Personally, I thought the series was excellent and I also think it is interesting that the way it was received by the public differed so much from the "public autopsy"



Prof K G Kerr is Assistant Editor of acp News and Consultant Microbiologist at Harrogate District Hospital

screened a while ago. I have no doubt that the lack of hysteria from the press was a major factor, but I also wonder whether there is a difference in the public's view between the words "anatomy" and "autopsy". Perhaps the retained organs "scandal" has endowed the word "autopsy" with a particular significance, or perhaps it was already there. Do we need to consider a bit of re-branding?

You might have thought that the furore of recent years would have rendered the paediatric pathologist extinct. Well, although perhaps still on the endangered species list, along with the bonobo, the panda and the white rhino, Caroline Gannon's article shows us why the speciality is still alive and well in the 21st century, and why it is a branch of autopsy (or should I start saying anatomical?) pathology that really can make a difference.

The government is going to take steps to reduce our pensions – why is it that whoever you vote for, the government always wins? Drastic measures are needed and Tim Reynolds is just the man to lead the fight. Now un-masked and with secret identity revealed, ~~Clark Kent~~ Professor Reynolds has come up with a scheme for making good the shortfall, if only in fantasy, anyway. Readers who follow this with real money do so at their own risk!

Remember last year's Olympic Games? Well, you can relive them through the eyes of a pathologist in Athens. Dina Tiniakos gives us her personal view of the games and the lead-up from a local pathological perspective.

Lovely RITA? No, not the meter maid of Beatles' fame, but the record of in-training assessment that makes the training of our SpRs such an interactive and mutually productive experience ... or does it? Iskander Chaudhry has conducted a survey of pathology trainees currently undergoing the process. What do they think of it all? Find out in the trainees' section.

All this and so much more, including the case for generalisation in cellular pathology, history, art, and the return of the Caped Pathologist. As Emyr would have said, "It's all good stuff!"

Cover Story

This issue we depart from the worlds of ultrastructure and canal boats, and enter the animal kingdom for our cover image. Meerkat or mere pathologist? The meerkat is a mongoose of the African grasslands – although I believe this one was in a zoo. They are masters of the surprise attack and will even eat scorpions by quickly biting off their stings first. They are themselves a tasty snack for eagles and jackals, hence the way one always stands guard whilst the others forage, or nap. Safety in numbers you see, just like

pathologists and the ACP.

The cover picture was taken by Dr Edward Penman who is a GP in Shrewsbury. As well as this more normal style of photography, Ed also has a natty line in arial photography, taken using a remote controlled model plane with a camera fixed to it. He kindly agreed to allow the use of this picture in exchange for a copy of this issue of *acp News*.

That is definitely a fair swap.

This image has also been posted in the photography forum on Doctors.net.uk.



Invitation to Contributors

In addition to the constant flow of material from ACP Council, ACP committees and ACP branches, *acp News* needs new material from you, the members of the ACP.

Pathology news items (any length): Any items related to the ACP or the College, pathologists in general, or medical and management matters that may have an impact on pathologists.

Articles (1200-1500 words): These can be papers, reviews, essays, commentaries, critiques or polemics. Leading articles are generally commissioned; however, submitted articles are always very welcome, as well as suggestions for articles and/or details of people whom the editor may approach.

Reports (1000 words): These may be personal views and reports on interesting meetings, travel, or anything else of interest to the readership.

Columns (600 words): Regular and irregular columnists exercise their thoughts.

Pathological creative writing: All literary forms, including short stories, serials, surrealism, and even poetry.

Appreciations (1000-2000 words): We prefer appreciations on retirement, rather than obituaries. Please discuss these with the editor before submission.

Photo-journalism: Favoured subjects include pathologists doing something interesting, or College and ACP officers doing anything at all. Interesting or artistic photographs are welcome.

Cartoons: Suggestions are welcome.

Curetings: Jokes and humorous titbits are always needed.

Debate: Letters to the editor are welcome, but may be shortened for publication, or even converted into articles. Please try to refrain from writing unless you are prepared to be published. All criticisms of organisations or named individuals will entitle the parties to a right of reply. Please bear in mind the UK libel laws! Argument will usually be curtailed after one cycle.

Trainees: Trainees are especially encouraged to submit material in any and all of the above categories. Appointments committees in particular value publications in *acp News*.

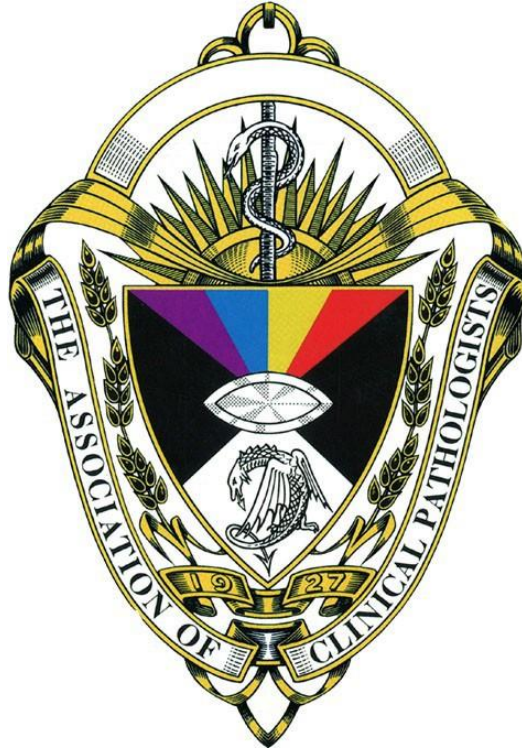
Current editorial desires: The editor would particularly encourage overseas contributors, material from trainees, material from non-histopathologists, commentary on current affairs in pathology, occasional columnists, innovations in pathology and humorous writing on pathology-related topics.

All suggestions are welcome; however, the editor's decision is final.

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WINTER	End of January	5th December

Copy is best submitted by e-mail, or on disc if the file size is large, in any version of Microsoft Word, although it should be possible to accommodate other formats. Submissions on paper by snail mail will also be accepted. Illustrations can be sent as transparencies or prints, but high-quality digital images (TIFF or JPEG) are preferred.



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