

# *ACB Wales Region Newsletter*

*November 2004*

**Welcome** to the ACB Wales Region newsletter, or even “Son of Newsletter” as one had been regularly published several years ago but had fallen by the wayside. This edition will confine itself to reports from the Region’s chairman, FCS rep and Audit Group secretary; future issues will include scientific reviews, news from the region and meeting reports. All of this depends on regular contributions in time for publication that will probably be twice per year coinciding with the Spring and Autumn Scientific Meetings.

## **A note from the Chair**

This year’s activities have followed the pattern of previous years with scientific meetings combined with audit with the majority of members from the region in attendance. This year’s Spring meeting was held at Llanelli with the Autumn meeting being held once again at the Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod Wells. We continue to develop protocols in conjunction with our clinical colleagues and the troponin audit presentation on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November will demonstrate how well this is working. The region was well represented at the recent ACBI Annual Meeting in Cork, to the extent that the organisers are interested in a joint meeting between ourselves and the ROI Region of the ACB. We continue to recruit high caliber trainees but remain concerned about the loss of Consultant Clinical Scientist posts.

A challenging year ahead!

**Keith Griffiths** – Chair, ACB Wales Region

**Agenda for Change** rumbles on. Graham Read gives a “snapshot” of the process:

**How did we get here?** Most people start with the Enderby case, in which a female speech therapist claimed indirect sexual discrimination; not by comparison with a male speech therapist (the majority being female) but by comparison with other better paid groups with a male preponderance. Once the European Court had upheld her case, the UK government – being responsible for the NHS as an ‘emanation of the State’ - had to set up a rational system for pay comparison. In March 1999, committees were being set up under Working in Partnership conditions to start the process. Some will remember ‘Nothing is agreed until all is agreed’.

**Where are we?** As I write, two unions – the Transport and General Workers and the Society of Radiographers – have completed their second ballots, with TGWU in favour and the SoR against. The two bigger unions – Amicus and Unison – are due to ballot shortly.

You will remember that the idea of a second ballot was that the unions would have been able to look at how A4C had gone in the early implementers, and then make a recommendation. In the event, after several postponements, a terse report from the EIs was received. Apart from the vital area of On Call and Overtime, it was alleged that A4C had gone well. But, if you were expecting a breakdown as to say how the MLSO2s had done, what percentage were on Spline 6 or Spline 7, forget it!

Understandably, Amicus has declined to make a recommendation to its members. Unison have recommended acceptance, but there are a lot of shop stewards out there who are not happy. They see A4C as overweighted in favour of those with direct clinical involvement, and believe craftsmen will do badly. To extend an analogy that ministers have been fond of, it's all very well praising the front-line soldier, but if he doesn't have unloved rear-echelon squaddies humping ammunition onto lorries, then he rapidly ceases to do anything useful.

**What next?** There is undoubtedly unrest out there. Sunderland is alleged to have concluded that around 40% of staff would be disadvantaged and require pay protection, and 'East London NHS staff', presumably the Royal London, Unison members, have withdrawn from local A4C negotiations, and are calling for a 'No' vote in the ballot. So, what if there is a 'No' vote? 'There is no Plan B' the minister said. One sincerely hopes that there are lots of Plan Bs, depending on who says no. In my Trust, some 40% of the nurses are Unison colleagues, not to mention the non-clinicals, so going ahead without Unison will be challenging. Even a policy of everyone entering into the Appeals process could well bring the ad-hoc matching and Job Evaluation panels to their knees. Like the unfortunate American reservists, this is not what they thought they had signed up for. Prediction is always difficult, particularly of the future, so we will just have to watch the web sites and the words of Secretary Geoff. Personally, I can see a hundred ways of it going wrong and no clear path to it going right. But then, I see Marvyn the paranoid android as a role model.

**Graham Read** – FCS Regional Rep

### **All Wales Audit**

Finally, David Oleesky brings us up to date on the activities of the All Wales Clinical Biochemistry Audit Group.

Between 2002 and 2004, audit meetings have been held 6 times, not including the November 2004 meeting.

Recent new audits have included:

- ❑ Lactose tolerance/breath testing
- ❑ Investigation of inborn metabolic errors
- ❑ Standardisation of multiple blood gas analysers
- ❑ Investigation of PCOS
- ❑ Investigation of pheochromocytoma
- ❑ Use of troponin assays
- ❑ Point of care testing (POCT) support

Recent re-audits have included:

- ❑ Re-audit of microalbumin analyses
- ❑ Investigation of menopause and monitoring of HRT
- ❑ Trace element assays/TPN monitoring

Many of these topics are ongoing. Recently finalised standards, which will shortly be put on the new ACB Wales web site, include:

- ❑ Thyroid function testing strategies
- ❑ Investigation of macroprolactinaemia
- ❑ Investigation of porphyria
- ❑ Investigation of renal stone disease
- ❑ Investigating short stature in children

They can currently be found on the ACB UK site: <http://www.acb.org.uk/welshaudit/>

The Audit Committee would be interested in hearing from anyone who might have a topic that may be suitable for an All Wales audit.

They should contact:

Dr Keith Griffiths – AWC BAG Chair  
Dr David Oleesky – AWC BAG Secretary  
Mike McGrane – IBMS representative  
Annette Thomas – WEQAS

Several of the longer serving members of the committee are looking towards standing down and volunteers to replace them would be very welcome; please contact David Oleesky if you are interested.

**David Oleesky** – AWC BAG Secretary

Please send any contributions for future Newsletters to Gareth Davies.