

VRC Newsletter

Issue 6

February 2010

The Purpose of Registration

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Editors Welcome

It's the start of a new year and I am pleased to launch for 2010 the new VRC newsletter.

This will be published quarterly with the next issue arriving in April, featuring the latest updates on Registration issues and developments.

I am also keen to hear your news and views, so if you would like to advertise your profession's upcoming events, news or contribute to the new 'Lab in Focus' feature please do not hesitate to contact me on vinc@execbs.com.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Stephanie Gunn
VRC Administrator

Council Business



Welcome to the British Association for Tissue Banking.

VRC are delighted to welcome the British Association for Tissue Banking (BATB) as a new registration group, and Helen Gillan as the BATB registrar to Council. Applications can now be submitted from the Tissue Banking profession and we look forward to adding another dynamic profession to VRC.

SCCT Registrar

The VRC Council would also like to give a very warm welcome to Sally Garner, the new registrar for the Society for Critical Care Technologists. John Withington has now stepped down from the post, and the Council members would like to extend their thanks for all his hard work and support during his time in post.

VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION

The Voluntary Registration Council for Healthcare Science (VRC) has been established with the aim of preparing Healthcare Science professions for statutory regulation. The regulatory process is a complex one and VRC has established the expertise and administrative processes to ensure that the registration process meets the standards required by the statutory regulators.

In July 2009 a report was published by the Department of Health entitled “The Regulation of Non-medical Healthcare Professions.” In the past the only means of statutory regulation available to the healthcare science professions was via the Health Professions Council (HPC). The report suggests alternatives to this that include ideas such as formal voluntary registration and licensing of practitioners. VRC has in place the mechanisms to lead healthcare science professions to whatever means of regulation is most appropriate to them.

Purpose of Registration

In terms of purpose regulation has a relatively simple goal. It’s aim is to protect the public by establishing clear and well defined scopes of proficiency and professional practice that practitioners must adhere to and in addition sets operating standards by insisting that registered practitioners adhere to a code of professional conduct.

Maintenance of Standards

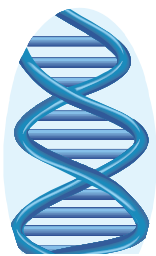
In order to ensure that registered practitioners maintain appropriate operating standards VRC conducts an annual audit of registrants. Registrants must maintain records of Continuous Professional Development and it is these records that VRC audits.

Message to Prospective Registrants

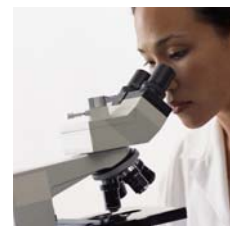
Voluntary registration and ultimately statutory regulation is not to be feared. For the vast majority of practitioners being registered does not change the way you work. What it does do is begin the process of rationalising and formalising training, education and qualification and the important process of setting clear and well defined operating standards along with standards of proficiency.

If you want change and you want to see your profession move forward then make that important decision and download the application form now.

**Terry Johnson
Chairman**



Northern Ireland Regional Genetics Laboratories Molecular Genetics



The Molecular Genetics laboratory in Belfast is one half of the Northern Ireland Regional Genetics Laboratories; the other being the Cytogenetics laboratory. We offer laboratory services for the molecular diagnosis of inherited and acquired genetic disorders.

Our laboratory came into being in the late '80s and has grown steadily over the years. Our department is staffed by 6 full-time and 2 part-time Genetic Technologists and 8 full-time and 2 part-time Clinical Scientists. We have one GT band 7 with the remainder at band 5. In 2010 we will welcome a new band 6 to our team.

Our department is sub-divided into a cancer section and a non-cancer section. The department also operates a stand-alone nucleic acid extraction facility. The extraction facility supports research groups based within the NHS and at Northern Ireland's two universities.

The bulk of GT work is laboratory based. GTs are involved in every step of the sample process, from specimen reception, through nucleic acid extraction, to testing and analysis. Clinical Scientists work alongside us, but specialise in analysis and reporting. Our bread and butter work in Belfast is testing for Cystic Fibrosis, Fragile X, Familial Hypercholesterolaemia (FH) and Breast Cancer. We test for a range of other disorders, but we also package and send away hundreds of samples per year for testing in our sister laboratories within the UK Genetic Testing Network. We also receive scores of samples from elsewhere for FH testing.

In 2007 the Belfast City Hospital Trust in which we are based amalgamated with 5 others to form the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. It is a behemoth employing 22,000 staff across dozens of sites in Greater Belfast; one of the largest NHS Trusts in the UK. The merger was designed to strip out duplication of resources, and reduce cost and waste. Our main challenge is trying to deliver an ever-expanding range of tests within tightening financial constraints. Increasingly we work together with our colleagues in Cytogenetics, but we are also looking at collaborating with departments elsewhere in the Trust who offer services using similar molecular techniques, such as Virology, Haematology, Immunology and Tissue Typing.

We actively encourage our staff to join the Voluntary Register. Of 6 eligible staff, three are registered, with the others at various stages of completing their application. Staff recognise registration as a quality mark for the work they deliver and subscribe to the idea of protecting the public by registering competent staff; we work alongside Clinical Scientists who have had the benefit of State Regulation for a number of years. Our GTs also see the urgent need to Register with the reforms due to Modernising Scientific Careers gathering pace. We hope to have all eligible staff registered in the New Year.

Borghert Jan Borghmans
AGTC Registrar

Forthcoming Events

- **AAPT Annual Conference, 18th September 2010 – Manchester Conference Centre**
(Please see AAPTregistrar@vrcouncil.org for further information)
- **BATB Annual Conference, 25th-27th May – Queens University, Belfast**
(Please see www.batb.org.uk for further information)
- **FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT!! BARS Annual Conference, 23rd-24th September 2010 –Marriott Hotel, Manchester**
(Details available shortly from www.eyescreening.org.uk)

Strange but Fascinating Facts you Never Needed to Know...

...Three hundred million cells die in the human body every minute.

Final Word...

VRC has been set up to provide a stepping-stone for healthcare science professions aspiring toward formal regulation via the Health Professions Council (**HPC**).

[It is important to remember that you do not have to belong to a Professional Body to apply for registration via VRC.](#)

Application forms are available via the VRC website <http://www.vrcouncil.org> or directly from the address below.

The fee for a new application is £45. To view the full list of charges (including renewal fees) please visit the website.

VRC is delighted to accept applications for registration from the 6 following professions

- **Anatomical Pathology Technologists**
- **Cytotechnologists**
- **Critical Care Technologists**
- **Genetic Technologists**
- **Diabetic Retinal Screeners**
- **Ophthalmic Science Practitioners**
- **Tissue Bank Technologists**

www.vrcouncil.org.uk

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