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Department of Health and Ageing



Quality Use of  
Pathology Program  
[www.health.gov.au/qupp](http://www.health.gov.au/qupp)

*The right test, at the right time,  
on the right patient, for the right  
clinical condition*

**September 2008**

**Welcome** to this newsletter about the work and priorities of the Quality Use of Pathology Committee (QUPC) which oversees the Quality Use of Pathology Program (QUPP).

In this issue:

- **Patient safety and quality in pathology workshop**
- **Lab tests online**
- **Facilitating best-practice pathology use through hand-held decision support devices (Path-Pilot)**
- **QUPC membership**
- **Contact details**
- **List of Current QUPP projects**

The QUPP aims to achieve improvement in health and economic outcomes from the use of pathology in health care, through the pursuit of better practice amongst referrers and providers of pathology services and knowledgeable and engaged consumers.

**For information on QUPP go to**  
[www.health.gov.au/qupp](http://www.health.gov.au/qupp)

## **Patient Safety and Quality in Pathology Workshop**

A one-day workshop was convened on 28 November 2007 by the Pathology Section in the Diagnostics and Technology Branch of the Australian Department of Health and Ageing, in

conjunction with the QUPC, the National Pathology Accreditation Advisory Council (NPAAC) and the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA). A full report of the workshop is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/qupp>

The workshop was attended by health consumer representatives, those responsible for policy, those who write pathology reports, those who read and use the reports, those who design and build information systems, and clinical and population researchers.

**Five top priority issues** for quality and safety in pathology were identified by the group. In order of priority they were:

- Workforce
- Smart requesting
- Positive patient identification
- Testing outside the current quality framework
- Smart reporting

Following the workshop, a **Workforce Consensus Statement** was developed to reflect stakeholder concerns about the significance of the pathology workforce issues identified during the workshop.

### **WORKFORCE CONSENSUS STATEMENT**

“There is a **critical threat to the safety and quality** of the world class pathology system that Australia currently has: it is **workforce shortages**”. The full consensus statement is available at [www.health.gov.au/qupp](http://www.health.gov.au/qupp)

A series of consultations with key stakeholder groups were held in early to mid 2008. A paper to promote further discussion and debate was prepared and is available at [www.health.gov.au/qupp](http://www.health.gov.au/qupp).

The report will be discussed at the next Patient Safety and Quality Workshop to be held in Canberra on 6 November 2008.



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### LAB TESTS ONLINE AUSTRALASIA

<http://www.labtestsonline.org.au/>

is a fantastic web site for consumers, clinicians and referrers.

Designed for the Australian healthcare consumer, it provides up-to-date and reliable information about laboratory tests and how they are used. A group of pathologists and senior laboratory scientists maintain the site so that the information on this site is accurate and helpful.

The project is managed by the Australasian Association of Clinical Biochemists Inc. and funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing under QUPP.

### Spotlight on a Completed QUPP

**Project** - Facilitating best practice pathology use through hand-held decision support devices (Path-Pilot)



This project was based on the premise that better use of laboratory tests could be achieved by giving clinicians information such as past test results, best practice test selection and alerts to unnecessary repeat testing at the time they requested a test. This project

aimed to assess whether wireless-enabled personal digital assistants (PDAs) could be used for this purpose.

Pilot studies were conducted in a single general medicine ward fitted with a wireless antenna. Junior medical staff were provided with wireless-enabled Hewlett Packard iPAQ PDAs. Software was written to allow laboratory test results to be viewed on a PDA for patients selected on the basis of ward, clinical unit or medical record number. For a given patient, about three weeks worth of test data were downloaded directly from the pathology database, from which results could be selected for viewing.

For a particular patient, clinicians could request routine laboratory tests using either a 'routine management' screen that listed the most commonly used tests, or a 'diagnosis' screen that indicated recommended tests for the selected clinical condition.

The next screen shows the tests requested and a panel showing the full test menu to assist clinicians in selecting other tests considered necessary for individual patients. The following screen shows the tests requested and those that would not be processed as they contravened in-built minimum re-test intervals based on best practice rules. For the blocked requests, the requester can choose to view the previous result, the rule or select an over-ride option; such over-rides are recorded in the Path-Pilot audit trail for later review. Completed test requests for a given patient are then printed at the ward /office network printer.

Medical staff identified advantages from using the Path-Pilot such as mobility and the ability to view the latest results without leaving ward rounds, along with immediate feedback on unnecessary repeat testing. Some users found the electronic requesting to be faster than the usual system. The



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laboratory specimen reception also preferred the Path-Pilot printed requests as all required fields were legible.

This project's final report produced in early 2005 was followed by a supplementary report in 2006. The Path-Pilot system is currently being migrated to smartphones to provide greatly increased professional and personal functionality. The chief investigators were Dr GH White, C Thompson, PA Phillips and R Shastri, Departments of Medical Biochemistry, General Medicine and Information Technology, Flinders Medical Centre, Bedford Park, SA 5042, Australia. For further information about the project contact Dr Graham White at [Graham.White@fmc.sa.gov.au](mailto:Graham.White@fmc.sa.gov.au)

#### **QUPP Contact Details**

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#### **Members of the QUPC**

Dr Michael Harrison (Chair)  
Australian Association of Pathology  
Practices

Dr Nicholas Demediuk  
Royal Australian College of General  
Practitioners

Dr Peter Garcia-Webb  
Australian Medical Association

Dr John Zeigler  
Royal Australian College of Physicians

Professor Neville Yeomans  
Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand

Dr Janney Wale  
Consumers' Health Forum of Australia

Professor Paul Monagle  
National Coalition of Public Pathology

Dr Raymond Chan  
Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia  
(RCPA)

Dr David Barton  
Department of Health and Ageing

Ms Debbie Stanford  
Department of Health and Ageing

**Descriptions of projects currently funded under the QUPP, as well as reports of completed projects endorsed by the QUPC, can be found at [www.health.gov.au/qupp](http://www.health.gov.au/qupp) See over for list of current projects.**



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## CURRENT FUNDED PROJECTS - September 2008

<b>QUPP Sub-program 1: Quality Consumer Services from a Pathology Perspective</b>	
<p><b><i>Lab Tests Online</i></b></p> <p>The Australasian Association of Clinical Biochemists Inc. Contact Mr Tony Prior: <a href="mailto:tony@aacb.asn.au">tony@aacb.asn.au</a></p>	<p>This project developed the Australasian Lab Tests Online website. The website was launched on 10 August 2007 and provides information on pathology tests performed in Australia, both diagnostic and screening, as well as by health condition and disease.</p> <p><a href="http://www.labtestsonline.org.au/">http://www.labtestsonline.org.au/</a></p>
<p><b><i>Optimising health benefits with Aboriginal People who take Warfarin.</i></b></p> <p>The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Contact Mr Ian Watts: <a href="mailto:ian.watts@racgp.org.au">ian.watts@racgp.org.au</a></p>	<p>This project is developing and piloting information strategies to improve the awareness and understanding of International Normalised Ratio (INR) testing and promote informed decision participation and consent among Aboriginal people for its use. The INR is a common and important pathology test for monitoring the safe use of Warfarin drug treatment.</p>
<b>QUPP Sub-program 2: Quality Pathology Referrals</b>	
<p><b><i>To promote improved antimicrobial usage in elderly females with asymptomatic bacteriuria</i></b></p> <p>Flinders Medical Centre. Contact Prof David L Gordon: <a href="mailto:d.gordon@flinders.edu.au">d.gordon@flinders.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project is seeking to improve antimicrobial treatment in elderly females by undertaking a controlled study in asymptomatic bacteriuria using selective reporting of antibiotic sensitivities.</p>
<p><b><i>Common Sense Pathology</i></b></p> <p>Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia. Contact: Dr Tamsin Waterhouse: <a href="mailto:tamsinw@rcpa.edu.au">tamsinw@rcpa.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project consists of eight colour supplements distributed with the <i>Australian Doctor</i> magazine, with the objective of educating GPs in the quality use of pathology, using practical case-based scenarios.</p>
<p><b><i>Enhancing the quality use of pathology for GP trainees</i></b></p> <p>The University of Adelaide. Contact Dr Caroline Laurence: <a href="mailto:caroline.laurence@adelaide.edu.au">caroline.laurence@adelaide.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project will undertake a needs assessment to inform the development of a training program and series of training modules focussed on maximising the uptake of education and training in the quality use of pathology by General Practitioner Registrars and Overseas Trained Doctors.</p>
<p><b><i>Evidence practice gap in GP pathology test ordering</i></b></p> <p>The University of Sydney. Contact A/Professor Helena Britt: <a href="mailto:helenab@med.usyd.edu.au">helenab@med.usyd.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project will analyse BEACH (Bettering the Evaluation And Care of Health) data from 2000-2007, incorporating about 240,000 GP pathology tests ordered, to compare current practice with evidence and guidelines on test ordering, including a focus on national health priority areas. The findings will inform future work to improve the quality of pathology ordering by GPs</p>
<b>QUPP Sub-program 3 Quality Pathology Practice</b>	
<p><b><i>The development of an agreed method and structure for developing, disseminating and maintaining guidelines for structured pathology reporting of cancer.</i></b></p> <p>Cancer Institute NSW. Contact: Professor Jim Bishop: <a href="mailto:jim.bishop@cancerinstitute.org.au">jim.bishop@cancerinstitute.org.au</a></p>	<p>This project is developing a process and framework for the development and dissemination of structured pathology reporting standards for six high incidence cancers (breast, colorectal, melanoma, lung, prostate and lymphoma), and a toolkit for the development of structured report standards for other cancers.</p>



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<p><b><i>Evidence-based best practice prevention of blood borne virus transmission in health care settings</i></b></p> <p>South Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service. Contact Professor William Rawlinson: <a href="mailto:w.rawlinson@unsw.edu.au">w.rawlinson@unsw.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project is developing guidelines for use throughout Australia on evidence-based best practice laboratory procedures and management of individual cases of suspected blood-borne virus transmission in health care settings.</p>
<p><b><i>Preparing for Genomic Medicine:</i></b></p> <p>The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia. Contact Dr Tamsin Waterhouse: <a href="mailto:tamsinw@rcpa.edu.au">tamsinw@rcpa.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project has completed a national audit of current genetic testing, developed a best practice approach to genetic testing, including guidelines for the requesting and reporting of genetic testing and developed a guide for the development of quality assurance programs. A web-based information resource for service provision is currently being developed.</p>
<p><b><i>Digital Microscope</i></b></p> <p>RCPA Quality Assurance Programs Pty Limited, Contact Dr Ian Gardner: <a href="mailto:iang@rcpa.edu.au">iang@rcpa.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project will provide high quality digital images for quality assurance, education, training and continuous professional development of pathologists in haematology, cytopathology and microbiology.</p>
<p><b><i>The Key Incident Monitoring &amp; Management Systems (KIMMS)</i></b></p> <p>RCPA Quality Assurance Programs Pty Limited Contact: Penny Petinos: <a href="mailto:pennyp@rcpa.edu.au">pennyp@rcpa.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project aims to collate and analyse the type and number of incidents in pathology laboratories, with the aim of identifying ways to reduce their occurrence and hereby increasing patient safety. The project will tackle quality assurance problems in the areas of both analytical and non-analytical errors.</p>
<p><b><i>Quality Assurance Module for Human Papillomavirus</i></b></p> <p>RCPA Quality Assurance Programs Pty Limited. Contact: Ros Escott: <a href="mailto:sqap@rcpaqap.com.au">sqap@rcpaqap.com.au</a></p>	<p>This project is developing a Quality Assurance Module for Human Papillomavirus testing.</p>
<p><b><i>Identifying, designing and piloting the use of synoptic forms and the implementation of colorectal cancer reporting protocols.</i></b></p> <p>The University of New South Wales, Contact Dr Sian Munro: <a href="mailto:sian.munro@unsw.edu.au">sian.munro@unsw.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project aims to improve pathology reporting, education and practice in colorectal cancer. It is identifying, designing and piloting the use of synoptic forms and the implementation of colorectal cancer reporting protocols.</p>
<p><b><i>Information extraction from narrative pathology reports</i></b></p> <p>University of Sydney: Contact Professor Jon Patrick: <a href="mailto:jonpat@it.usyd.edu.au">jonpat@it.usyd.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project will pilot the development and application of an automatic software system for information extraction from pathology narrative reports, using natural language analysis and synoptic reporting frameworks for the preparation of case summaries.</p>
<p><b><i>Computerised pathology order entry (CPOE) systems</i></b></p> <p>The University of Sydney, Health Informatics, Research and Evaluation Unit, Contact: Professor Johanna Westbrook: <a href="mailto:j.westbrook@usyd.edu.au">j.westbrook@usyd.edu.au</a></p>	<p>This project is identifying how computerised pathology order entry systems with varying levels of electronic decision support can enhance the efficiency of pathology services and lead to more effective and rational pathology ordering which in turn may improve patient outcomes.</p>