

FORENSIC PATHOLOGY SPECIALIST GROUP

Notes of the fourth meeting, held at 11:00am on Monday 14 September 2009 at the Home Office, London

Present:

Harry Millward-Sadler	(Chair)
Jeff Adams	Home Office
Martin Bottomley	ACPO
Caroline Browne	Human Tissue Authority
Jack Crane	NIO
Anne Harrison	NPIA
Dean Jones	NPIA
Nigel Meadows	Coroners Society
Basil Purdue	BAFM
Trevor Rothwell	Consultant
Charlie Wilson	BAFM
Kenny Chigbo	Home Office (Secretary)

Apologies

Linda Cockburn	COPFS
James Grieve	Scottish Executive
Paul Johnson	RCPATH

Introductions

1.1 Harry Millward-Sadler welcomed all to the fourth meeting of the Forensic Pathology Specialist Group, especially Dean Jones who has just joined the group and was attending his first meeting.

Apologies

2.1 Apologies were received from Linda Cockburn, James Grieve and Paul Johnson.

Minutes of the third meeting 22 June 2009

3.1 The minutes of the third meeting were agreed.

Matters arising

4.1 Mortuary Standards: An update was provided on the current position with respect to the HTA inspection at Cardiff mortuary and the subsequent police investigation. Some of the licenses of the mortuary have been suspended. This means that the only facility in the area is currently unavailable. The investigation is ongoing.¹

4.2 Revalidation: Jack Crane informed the FPSG that the appraisers needed to be trained for the proposed appraisal system. The Forensic Science

¹ Events have changed since September and the content described here reflected the position in September rather than the current position.

Regulator has been asked in writing to agree to fund the training. The proposal is for the appraisal system to be the same across the UK. The new regime will be piloted on one or two practices over a period of one or two days. A satisfactory appraisal would be essential for the revalidation of practitioners. It will be necessary to consider the possible requirement to have a responsible officer to oversee the whole process. In the NHS this could be a medical director. The officer will be expected to resolve issues before they are escalated to the GMC level. The proposals will be implemented as soon as the Regulator gives his approval for funding. Jack Crane is likely to be able to report on more progress on this by the next FPSG meeting.

4.3 Other actions from the last meeting were either cleared or were agenda items.

Code of Practice

5.1 Jeff Adams said the current draft was modified on the basis of comments received. The FPSG commented on the latest draft as follows:

- The pathologist's report in page 17 should mention the status of tissues seized under section 19 of PACE.
- There was a suggestion that an interim report of fact should be available within 14 days and this will be discussed at the next Pathology Delivery Board. The FPSG discussed whether this interim report should include a Critical Conclusions Check (CCC). The FPSG agreed that the C of P should clearly state that the CCC was only for final reports.
- Paragraph 7.2.3 deals with a preliminary report and this should satisfy the requirement for an interim report.
- An interim report should be written immediately after the post-mortem, detailing the current state of play. The C of P should be modified to reflect this and it should not be called a "report". This should include, what has been found, what is being retained, etc. It should also include a line indicating that the conclusions may change subject to new findings. Nigel Meadows agreed to circulate the forms used for this purpose in the Northwest.

Action: Nigel Meadows

- The first line of paragraph 6.2.4 should state that the role of the pathologist is 'to advise' not 'to be responsible';.

5.2 The next steps will be to circulate the final version by email and then submit it to the relevant RCPATH subcommittee and the End User Specialist Group. It should also be submitted to the ACPO Homicide Working Group. The RCPATH will publish the C of P on their website for consultation over 12 weeks.

Action: Jeff Adams

Mortuary Standards

6.1 The current version of the paper has been modified according to comments made at the last FPSG meeting. The paper also incorporates additional comments by Home Office legal advisers. Caroline Browne and Jack Crane will provide further comments to Jeff Adams.

Action: Caroline Browne/Jack Crane

6.2 The FPSG commented on the revised draft as follows:

- The fifth bullet in paragraph 3.2.2 should include specimen taken under PACE and matters under HTA legislation.
- The third bullet in paragraph 3.2.4 needed redrafting/clarification.

6.3 The next steps will be to seek comments from the organisations listed in the front of the document – ACPO, BAFM, Coroners Society, etc, and then present it again before the FPSG.

6.4 The FPSG discussed whether the HTA should enforce the standards as an agent for another authority, or if the HTA should adopt the standards as HTA standards. If the latter option was chosen, the implications are that the bodies being regulated would require full notice about the changes. Funding was also flagged up as an issue. It was agreed that Caroline Browne and Jeff Adams should draft a paper for FPSG consideration setting out the options, with the pros and cons of each option.

Action: Caroline Browne/Jeff Adams

Audit

7.1 The FPSG discussed James Grieve's audit paper and agreed on the need for anonymity. Trevor Rothwell volunteered to anonymize the reports and Dean Jones agreed to provide Trevor with administrative support. It was also agreed that specific types of cases should be proposed for the audit, and the audit should be developed as part of continuous professional development for both auditors and those being audited. The Chair will write back to James Grieve to approve the paper and its further development.

Action: Harry Millward-Sadler

7.2 The FPSG agreed that it would be useful to have someone that was not a forensic pathologist to participate in auditing. This will help provide a different perspective to the exercise. It was suggested that a Senior Investigating Officer would be a good option. Anne Harrison agreed to investigate the possibility of nominating one or two SIOs and will report back at the next meeting.

Action: Anne Harrison

Tissue Retention

8.1 Jeff Adams asked the FPSG to send him any comments they may have on the paper in terms of issues or gaps. ACPO, Ministry of Justice, the Coroners Society, HTA and the Home Office were meeting on 14 October. The FPSG agreed that a forensic pathologist needed to be represented at the meeting and Jack Crane was nominated to attend. He will email colleagues seeking their views before the meeting.

Action: Jack Crane

Action: All

Radiology

9.1 The FPSG noted the activity in this field and that it correlates to forensic pathology. It agreed with the principle of setting standards in the field as long as radiographers were acting under the guidance of a forensic pathologist. The FPSG would prefer the standards not to be prescriptive or restrictive. Engagement with radiographers should be at local level and over-riding control should be with the pathologist.

Any Other Business

10.1 The FPSG discussed concerns about numbers of pathologists needed to provide a quality service, the distribution of pathologists across the regions and recruitment and retention into the service. The NPIA were working on a strategic plan for the next 5-10 years. It will also be necessary to formalise arrangements for mentoring new registrants.

Date of next meeting

11.1 The next meeting will be held on 14 December 2009 at Conference Room 12, Home Office, 2 Marsham Street.