

2016 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

PRESIDENTS REPORT

NLEG

The National Laboratory Engagement Group made up of NZMLWU and DHB employer representatives is a very important group and has continued to meet and progress mutual issues of concern as have the Local Laboratory Engagement Groups (LLEGS). One of the more interesting by-products of these forums has been a general improvement in bipartisan relationships with our employers. NLEG has been investigating whether it is appropriate to invite non-DHB members to participate and these discussions are on-going.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the NZMLWU continues to transfer to in the non-DHB sector as DHB's choose not to provide their own Laboratory services. This is of course is unsettling to say the least for those members who transfer to the new employer, but likely that membership will continue to grow in this area in the future.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The Government continues to publish policies that affect the laboratory. The latest is the new biologic drugs that are to be funded by Pharmac that will affect several areas of the laboratory as monitoring of drug effectiveness will be required. Genetic predispositions to drug failure are also likely.

Changes in the delivery of the cervical cancer screening programme set to start in 2018 are already having a profound effect on job security in cytology labs and the support of this workforce needs to be a priority.

The union must remain alert to changes such as these that will affect how we work and aim to provide the right advice to decision makers to minimise harm to a fragile workforce.

PATIENT/PERSON CENTRED OR PATIENT/PERSON CENTRIC CARE

What is patient or person centred/centric care? This has become the mantra of the day and represents a trend moving through western economies today.

Patient or person centred care is a way that sees people using health and other services as equal partners in planning, developing and monitoring care to make sure it meets their needs. This means that people (and their families) are at the centre of decisions and sees them as experts, working alongside professionals to get the best outcome. This is placing extra demands on professionals in terms of the way that those interactions are managed. To ask laboratory professionals to provide information that the public requires in the way that the public requires, and that assists in maintaining an individual's own health will require practical shifts in thinking. Laboratory practitioners need to be fully supported by their employers to provide this. Practitioners must not be made to feel guilty in order to motivate changes in behaviour too quickly. We must be supported with continuing education and resources in a safe environment. The pace of change in the health sector is likely to remain very high and we will require increased resources to adapt. After all, supporting "your" staff will provide employers the best and most successful outcomes for the future.

There are plenty of opportunities that the laboratory can offer in responding to the patient/person centred/centric way of care. The points below represent a small number of the types of things that the laboratory can be involved in:

- We typically have longitudinal data sets of an individual's results for a wide variety of health markers. This is useful for individuals monitoring their own health.
- We have collective data on populations that can be instructive for advising individuals of risk.
- We can provide data on the effectiveness of new treatment modalities.
- We can provide data about effective practice to other practitioners in positive ways.
- We can be instructive in informing central government of the effectiveness of policies. Such as if immunisation has/has not reduced incidence. Whether housing policies

resulting in less crowded conditions and warmer homes result in reduced rates of respiratory disease.

- We can give early warning of increasing rates of infection in the community and provide this information in real time.
- We can provide advice to procurement agencies about the right device to fund or as the case may be not fund for point of care testing before the device is introduced to the market. We can also perform validation in local markets for New Zealand consumers. This will directly inform individuals of the right devices for them.
- We can advise if tests performed in different places are equivalent.

There are numerous other examples to pick from but in general the laboratory is a pivotal place for interpreting a patient's data against a backdrop of population statistics, social policies and government priorities among other environmental factors.

Stewart Smith
President