

Clinical Serology and Molecular SIG

From the retiring National Convenor, David Dickeson

The Clinical Serology Special Interest Group was established after a meeting in Adelaide in 1989 with Peter Robertson (now retired from Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick) the inaugural national convenor and only a few dozen members. It was established to provide a forum for the discussion of serological techniques with the objective to develop a strategy to monitor and control the quality of diagnostic reagents. This was published in 1994 (Backhouse *et al.*, *Australian Microbiologist*, 1994; 15: 37–45). Branches of this SIG were formed in most states from 1989 onwards. I became involved as NSW branch treasurer in 1993 with Leon Heron as convenor and I have remained as secretary/treasurer ever since. The group was expanded in 2003 to include molecular techniques in the medical diagnostic industry and the combined SIG convenor was Robyn Wood (formerly from Queensland Medical Laboratory, then TGA). In 2004 I took on the position as convenor at the ASM annual meeting in Sydney and have continued in that role until now.

The CS&M SIG Working Group was formed in 2009 after several ASM meetings and NRL workshops with the great assistance of Sheena Adamson (Communicable Diseases Branch, NSW Health) who remains as the working group secretary. This group is overseen by the ASM Clinical Microbiology Standing Committee and aims to be a proactive source of education and information and able to give advice on serology and related molecular testing. Teleconferences held every 3 months have kept an expert group of scientists and medical microbiologists in contact. Dissemination of information has been achieved through ASM, NRL, RCPA QAP, various direct emails and the national email routing 'SERSIG', which links all members with requests for information or help in resolving problems. Now SERSIG has 419 members.

At the ASM annual scientific meeting each year, we organise a workshop with topics including QAP, case studies and issues with diagnostic kit failures or problems. Previous workshops connected with ASM annual meetings in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney were organised by Ros Escott (RCPA QAP now retired). In 2014 a molecular diagnosis workshop was held on the Saturday afternoon at the Peter Doherty Institute prior to the national meeting. The meeting was chaired by Wayne Dimech and Darren Jardine with over 80 attending. It included topics on molecular testing, validation and standards, choosing equipment and new technologies.

An Annual General Meeting of the SIG is organised by the convenor at each yearly meeting and it includes branch reports, industry input and discussion of current topics. In Melbourne last year 17 members

attended, reports were tabled for NSW, QLD, VIC, SA and WA, and a call for nominations for new national convenor, secretary and workshop organiser was made.

After over 10 years of service as national convenor and serving as secretary/treasurer of the NSW branch since 1993, I will be handing over the duties and responsibilities of the ASM CS&M SIG to the new convenor. Coordinating, participating and helping with all the events and discussions of this SIG has been a pleasure for over 22 years. I would like to thank Wayne for his help and advice as secretary and administrator of the SERSIG email routing and especially thank Sheena for being the driving force behind the working group, organising teleconferences, emails to members and letters to governing bodies. I trust the Clinical Serology and Molecular SIG will continue to meet the needs of members by providing useful and timely scientific information about diagnostic serology and molecular techniques and related matters. I am sure the SIG will be left in good hands with the help of the new executive.

New office bearers for the SIG are:

Convenor: Linda Hueston, Pathology West – ICPMR, Westmead, NSW.

Email: Linda.Hueston@health.nsw.gov.au

Secretary: Megan Wieringa, Monash Health, Clayton, Victoria.

Email: Megan.Wieringa@monashhealth.org

Workshop organiser: Bruce Wong, PaLMS, RNSH, St Leonards, NSW.

Email: Bruce.Wong@health.nsw.gov.au

State Branch Convenors 2014

NSW: Deane Byers, RCPA.

Email: serology@rcpaqap.com.au

Victoria: Wayne Dimech (retiring), NRL.

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Queensland: Cheryl Bletchley and Theo Sloots (retiring).

Email: cheryl_bletchly@health.qld.gov.au

South Australia: Trish Haahesy, IMVS.

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