

**F**or months I have been monitoring the booking figures for Congress, waiting to see if numbers compare favourably with previous years and looking to see how the introduction of a Sunday programme has been received. It might not seem earth-shattering stuff, but for me it is a pretty nail-biting time.

Naturally, I want Congress to be a success; it says much about the Institute that we have the most challenging event for the ICC to host, in that we use every single available hall and display area for our lectures and exhibition. We are not the largest numerically, but we outstrip even the major political party conferences in terms of space usage, and that is no small achievement.

I'm approaching Congress with a sense of excitement and anticipation, but also with frustration and sadness. I know that it has been harder than ever for people to get the time and funds to attend. I know the reasons and understand that we're all still paddling along on very choppy financial waters, but I am sick and tired of short-sighted approaches. Our profession is well down the pecking order for hand-outs; we ask for little and receive even less, but where Congress is concerned, there is a major trick being missed. This is a chance to motivate, educate and invigorate an incredible workforce that flies beneath the radar, until it comes to the subject of cost saving, and then we're in the spotlight.

# LOOK TO THE FUTURE



It's time to end the short-sighted approach and invest in the future.

I have been looking back at the programmes for past Congresses and what strikes me is that irrespective of the challenge that we faced at the time, biomedical scientists remain the workforce that keeps the UK pathology service running – all day, every day. I had serious concerns about our future when the Modernising Scientific Careers project was being developed, but the reality is we're needed and still here. The impact of the 100,000 Genomes Project will really start to be felt next year, when CCGs start commissioning gene sequencing services. Who will be key to delivering this new development? Biomedical scientists, of course, which brings me to the point I

want to make. Please, please invest in the development of this under-recognised, amazing, professional workforce. Congress is one massive learning package, so if you can raid a fund or dig down the back of the pathology sofa for emergency cash reserves, please send someone to Congress, even if just for a day. Regard it as an investment in all our futures and an experience that no one forgets.

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