

MY LAB

LABORATORY ON THE ROCK

IBMS Gibraltar Branch Secretary **Norbert Sene** gives a guided tour of the Pathology Department at Saint Bernard's Hospital in Gibraltar.

Gibraltar is a British Overseas Territory positioned on the northern shore of the Strait of Gibraltar that links the Mediterranean Sea with the Atlantic Ocean, at the boundary between the continents of Europe and Africa. The Gibraltar Health Authority's Department of Pathology is located at Saint Bernard's Hospital.

The department is multidisciplinary, covering transfusion science, haematology, biochemistry, microbiology, mycology, virology, histology, cytology, and immunohistochemistry services. Our laboratory information system links all sections, which feature a wide range of sophisticated analysers and other equipment, which, together with the latest techniques, provide a comprehensive repertoire of tests. In 2017, the department performed almost one and a half million analyses, from both primary and secondary care samples.

Pathology Services Manager Dr Alex Menez heads his team of biomedical scientists, biomedical assistants, production assistants and clerical staff. Quality Manager Audrey Olivares-Smith ensures standards are maintained and works closely with Blood Bank Manager Ernest Gomez to comply with blood donation directives.

The department participates in UK NEQAS schemes and all qualified biomedical scientists are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (UK). In addition, Gibraltar has its own IBMS branch and enjoys an active CPD program.

Senior biomedical scientists Wayne Acris



and Joe Pickering lead the biochemistry section, using the latest analysers and covering a wide range of clinical tests, from LFTs to hormones, HbA1c and allergy screening. Biomedical scientists Karyn Rowbottom and Mohit Mahbubani undertake a wide range of haematological tests, from FBC to leukaemia diagnosis and, together with Consultant Haematologist Dr Pepe Duran, manage an INR clinic for more than 500 patients.

The department manages its own blood bank, supplied mostly from local donations; the units are leuko-depleted, grouped and checked for transfusion-transmitted viruses for cross-matching.

Senior biomedical scientists Lawrence Stagnetto and Mike Allison lead the histology and cytology section that includes biomedical scientist Andrew Cavilla and Cytoscreener Steven Garcia. The section processes a wide range of specimens, including skin lesions and cervical, gastric, and breast biopsies; all part of screening programmes. The team works closely with Consultant Pathologist Dr Naim Qandi, who also

conducts post-mortems. Biomedical scientists Tanya Watson, Carmen Delicado, Charlotte Gillborne-Jones, Samy Pearce and Jennie Dodd run our microbiology section, which is geared towards the isolation, identification and antibiotic sensitivity testing of micro-organisms, from bacteria to viruses. Tests range from traditional bacterial culture on agar plates to detection by PCR. Consultant Microbiologist Dr Nick Cortes provides support to the section.

The department also incorporates the Laboratory of the Public Analyst, with Public Analysts Natalie Hernandez and Xenia Duarte performing the statutory function of microbiological and chemical examination and analysis of food and drink. It is also responsible for providing a wide range of scientific analysis, including environmental parameters, analysis of drugs of abuse and toxicology, as well as providing expert witness to the law courts.

The department is proud of its excellent teamwork, and those that have retired, like myself, continue to be a part of the Gibraltar pathology family. 