

I am about to retreat in to a darkened room with a damp tea towel wrapped around my fevered brow; I do not wish to be disturbed for some time. The reason? Congress.

After months of planning, I am immensely proud and relieved to launch the 2019 main lecture programme, which is in this edition of *The Biomedical Scientist* and on the Congress website. Everyone who knows me will know my biennial shroud waving as I wring my hands and predict problems ahead, but every Congress has proved me wrong. Somehow, no matter how tough the environment or how non-existent the budgets, Congress remains an essential in our professional calendar and long may that continue.

Like programmes from much loved concerts, I have kept past Congress programmes and revisiting them is somewhat akin to a highly condensed history lesson. As with any evolutionary process, it is the fittest that survive and the challenge is always to ensure that Congress remains strong and relevant in a challenging environment. With this in mind, Congress is offering even more content this year.

I know we fiercely protect our weekends but to help relieve staff pressures during the week Congress will again open on the Sunday to enable more people to attend its most popular programmes of quality management, and education and training, which will also feature during the week. Point-of-care testing (POCT)

CONGRESS LAUNCHED



Sarah May, IBMS Deputy Chief Executive, on the extensive programme and additions for Congress.

has grown massively in importance, so, new this year, is a whole lecture programme on POCT.

Also new is our veterinary pathology programme, which will appeal to a far wider audience than simply those of us in veterinary laboratories.

I can trail the benefits of Congress as much as I like, but there will always be the question of cost and I am very pleased to say that the premium early discount has been reintroduced. This started on 1 February when bookings opened and runs until 31 March, so delegates are advised to book early to benefit from this highly competitive rate.

I want to finish by remembering two very special ladies, Jennifer Johnson and Mary Macdonald. Jen and Mary were Council members who both died far too

young but they left an amazing legacy that reflects the people they were. They each left funds to support the development of Institute members and this year the Jen Johnson bursary will fund 20 Congress places for members studying for an Institute exam and the Mary Macdonald award will fund 20 support staff members to attend the biomedical support staff programme. The generosity of these two people will help a new generation of members to experience Congress. Actions speak louder than words.

Sarah May
Deputy Chief Executive



Institute of Biomedical Science is the professional body for the biomedical science profession.

INSTITUTE OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE
12 Coldbath Square
London, EC1R 5HL
United Kingdom
+44 (0)20 7713 0214
+44 (0)20 7837 9658
Email: mail@ibms.org
Web: www.ibms.org

PRESIDENT
Alison Geddis CSci FIBMS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Jill Rodney

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Sarah May CSci FIBMS

EXECUTIVE HEAD OF EDUCATION
Alan Wainwright CSci FIBMS

**EXECUTIVE HEAD OF MARKETING
AND MEMBERSHIP**
Lynda Rigby

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
education@ibms.org

EXAMINATIONS
examinations@ibms.org

MEMBERSHIP
mc@ibms.org

CHARTERED SCIENTIST
chartered@ibms.org

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