

VIRTUAL SUPPORT

Last year, the IBMS Support Hub was set up to support members. Here **Jocelyn Pryce, Tahmina Hussain** and **Mike Carter** explain why it was launched and the vital resource it has proved to be.

The past year has been an emotionally challenging and intense period for all. The majority of our members have worked throughout the pandemic, often finding they have conflicting demands on their time and resources.

This can result in feelings of anxiety and isolation, as we all experience the impact of the pandemic in our own ways.

As your professional body, the IBMS is committed to supporting members whenever and however we can. Last year we asked members to identify areas they find challenging and suggest ways the IBMS could better support you in a membership survey. Many said more virtual networking and further support with CPD and training would be helpful.

Considering this feedback, we suggested holding a forum in which members could voice their thoughts, opinions, concerns, and questions live online, as opposed to by written feedback. Our idea was to provide an opportunity for members to literally voice their

opinions, questions and concerns directly to experts within the membership of the IBMS. We visualised these online sessions as being the centre of the wheel with the spokes being the attendees, disseminating the information outwards to their colleagues and spreading the word – so, the IBMS Support Hub was born.

Diverse and wide-ranging

The IBMS Support Hub is a regular lunchtime “surgery” delivered via Zoom with sessions covering areas that members have told us they find challenging. Using member feedback, we created a diverse and wide-ranging programme of sessions (see box). From reflection to plagiarism, we’ve busted a few myths along the way!

We have been overwhelmed by the success of these sessions and the positive feedback. Alongside the attendees who have benefited from the discussions, information and learning, the three of us have

enhanced our CPD through our role as panel members.

The first session we ran was fully booked within an hour, further free tickets were released and were snapped up. Requests were made for the sessions to be recorded and we have now built up a significant collection of Hub recordings hosted through our website, each one offering members a CPD opportunity in the form of support, information and guidance.

Interaction encouraged

Due to the inclusive nature of the sessions, we have found that the Hub appeals to all grades of members and across all stages of career – from pre-registered candidates and support staff, who are new to CPD or preparing evidence for their registration portfolio, to experienced training officers and verifiers, who are happy to come along and share best practice.

We have been able to support and develop new trainers by offering sessions on soft skills and we’ve tackled difficult issues, such as plagiarism.

We have been joined by guest panel members to provide specialist knowledge in areas such as the new cytology portfolios and approaches to the higher qualifications we provide. Attendance varied across the





sessions, depending on the subject covered. Numbers were highest when we were covering CPD-related subjects, while niche areas that may only affect a limited number of people drew smaller audiences. There have been common threads through all sessions – interaction is actively encouraged, every opportunity for networking is taken and, in the end, everyone comes away having learnt new things and met new people.

In addition to the subject-specific sessions, we have also set up a Wellbeing Support Hub, where everyone is welcome. These are drop-in support sessions where we can discuss how we are and share coping strategies in a safe, non-judgemental environment (these sessions are not recorded). The first of these was run as a lunchtime session, but consensus was that members would prefer this to be an evening session, so that more people could join. Following the feedback from Twitter, we now host this wellbeing session in the evening.

Support Hub participants share what they've learned with colleagues who could not attend and offer to submit ideas for future Hubs where they'd contribute their own expertise as a panel member

– another major CPD opportunity. Those not able, or reluctant, to participate on camera can use the “chat” facility in Zoom to engage with the discussion and ask questions anonymously. Additionally, the session recordings are a useful resource for those unable to attend and allow members to listen back at their own pace to ensure no loss of meaning or to refer to if asked a question by a colleague or candidate.

Other benefits that have come from these sessions are ideas such as developing learning agreement forms (this came from the soft skills for training officers session) and sharing questions for specialist portfolios. This further demonstrates that there is a need for these sessions to continue supporting members as we move forward.

A resource to connect


Born from the membership wellbeing survey, the Support Hub sessions continue to develop from member participation, comments and suggestions. Participants have specifically asked for us to please keep running these Support Hub sessions! The hubs now clearly play an important role in supporting members

THE SUPPORT HUB HAS COVERED

- ✓ Reflection
- ✓ Plagiarism
- ✓ Barriers to CPD
- ✓ Myth-busting
- ✓ Approaches to evidence
- ✓ Verification
- ✓ Soft skills for training officers
- ✓ Support for training officers and candidates
- ✓ Examination Q&A
- ✓ Laboratory approval Q&A
- ✓ New cytology portfolios
- ✓ HSD v MSc

To stream previous sessions and register for upcoming IBMS Support Hub events, visit ibms.org/cpd/ibms-support-hub

and we will continue holding these sessions as long as the membership find them useful.

Through the IBMS Support Hub, members have a resource to connect with each other during difficult times and develop an ongoing network for learning and growth within the profession. 

The IBMS Support Hub is run by:

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