

## MY LAB

# A BESPOKE STATE-OF-THE-ART LAB

**Alix Costello** gives a guided tour of the laboratory facilities at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.

**B**lackpool Victoria Hospital is a district general hospital specialising in cardiothoracic

care. Cellular pathology at Blackpool is a UKAS-accredited service that provides routine diagnostic investigations for a wide range of specimen types.

We process over 35,000


tissue samples and around 3000 cytology samples each year. As Blackpool is a cardiothoracic centre, we receive a lot of lung work, including biopsies, resections, endobronchial ultrasound (EBUS) samples and frozen sections. In addition to diagnostic work, we also provide a lung molecular pathology service to our neighbouring trusts in the Lancashire region, which enables faster turnaround times for lung cancer patients.

We have a fantastic team of medical laboratory assistants, assistant practitioners, biomedical scientists, medical secretaries and consultant histopathologists who all work together to provide the cellular pathology service to the Blackpool region. Our team has recently expanded, and we have a lot of new staff in the department, which is helping us to manage our post COVID-19 backlogs. We are also a keen training laboratory and each year we host trainee



cut-up benches. The team were all very excited to get started in the new laboratory and we have seen a boost in morale since working in the new environment. Last month, Michael Osborn, President of the Royal College of Pathologists, came to officially open the laboratory including cutting a red ribbon. I commissioned a piece of artwork to commemorate the occasion, which is now

hanging outside the laboratory entrance.

Despite the excitement of the new laboratory, the last few months have not been without their challenges. Pressures on the cellular pathology department have only worsened as we try to tackle patient backlogs following the global pandemic. Also, juggling a laboratory move, training, a national wax shortage and a UKAS inspection has kept us all very busy. However, the new laboratory has provided us with the opportunity to streamline our work processes and further develop our scientists into advanced roles, including genomic biomedical scientists and dissection practitioners. Whilst there is a lot of work still to be done and despite the workload challenges, every day I am grateful to be part of the hardworking, capable and supportive cellular pathology team at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. 

biomedical scientists from the University of Central Lancashire and Lancaster University. In fact, my journey at Blackpool started as a placement student from Lancaster University.

In June 2022, the histology team was very fortunate to move into a new laboratory after a year-long project of architecture, design and building work. The ventilation systems in the previous histology lab were no longer fit for purpose, meaning that laboratory staff had to wear respirators when working around formalin.

Thanks to a lot of hard work from managers at the trust, we were able to commission a bespoke, state-of-the-art laboratory with new purpose-built equipment that could modernise our histology workflows and provide a safer working environment. One of the biggest and most welcome changes to the department was the addition of two extra