

MY LAB

A WHOLE NEW APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT

Leslie Ramos, Cellular Pathology Quality Manager, gives a guided tour of her lab and talks through a recent virtual UKAS assessment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of healthcare in the UK, including how the histology and mortuary department, which is part of our cellular pathology service, has had to adapt to manage our assessments in the last few months.

The service, based at University Hospital, Coventry and part of the Coventry and Warwickshire Pathology Services (CWPS), is one of the largest networked pathology service providers in the country. Our vision is to provide a safe and responsive service through innovation and efficiency. CWPS is a managed network of laboratories hosted by University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) NHS Trust. CWPS provides services to South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust (SWFT), George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust and Queens Hospital in Burton, as well as the surrounding clinical commissioning groups, with histology laboratories based at UHCW NHS Trust and SWFT, which were both included in the assessment.

The histology department processes over 300,000 slides a year and was due an on-site UKAS surveillance visit earlier this year, but the COVID-19 pandemic meant the assessment had to be carried out virtually using Microsoft (MS) Teams.

To meet the needs of this new approach we submitted our pre-assessment documents via Dropbox. While attaching and labelling a folder's name was complicated at first, after a few you find the system user-friendly in the end.

The remote assessment was certainly very different to having an on-site visit



and my one piece of advice is to wait for the “official” MS Teams invitation from the UKAS assessor to prevent having multiple invitations on the same day and time. We had instances where staff were waiting to join the unofficial MS Teams meeting, while others were already on the right meeting. We also had to ensure rooms were available for technical assessment and all technical equipment – such as laptops, cameras, speakers and headsets – was available for the key staff. Mobile phones and iPads were also available to use for live recording requests.

Staff were invited to the opening meeting on the first day and this was followed by smaller meetings with the technical and quality management system assessor in separate rooms. Live recording for microtomy and embedding were also requested. This worked well using mobile phones.

Although the assessment review was carried out over several hours for a couple of days, it was relaxed and flowed well with any questions easily answered. The department was able to demonstrate the

changes that had been made and introduced in previous visits and the team shared a screen to view the documents.

Whilst this was a very challenging time for the department, we were able to carry out the assessment with ease. Although there were slight issues with frozen screens and patchy calls during MS Teams meetings, the department felt the accreditation has been beneficial in these unprecedented times.

The team is delighted to have retained accreditation status for another year, and it was pleasing to hear the assessors say they could see a massive improvement since the last visit and that our lab is “a very good lab and quality assured”.

The retention of this accreditation status represents a significant achievement by the entire team and could not have been reached without the commitment from every member of the whole network cellular pathology team (mortuary staff, UHCW NHS Trust and SWFT histology clinical, lab and secretarial staff), even more so during the current situation. 