



# PathWay

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PATHOLOGISTS OF AUSTRALASIA



NOVEMBER 2016 | Published by RCPA

Issue #064

## In This Issue

- Footballer Sam Reid celebrated International Pathology Day with personal tribute to pathology
- New diabetes 'care sets' could prevent complications and save money
- Lay Committee helped the College identify the ideal pathologist
- New position statement aims to reduce patient harm from inappropriate tumour marker testing

## Welcome to the November edition of ePathWay

The fourth International Pathology Day was celebrated around the globe last week. RCPA President Dr Michael Harrison stated that the celebrations highlighted the value of pathology in health care, and in every person's life.



Left to Right: Dr Debra Graves, Sam Reid, Sandra Sully, Dr Michael Harrison

In Sydney, our own College's celebration of International Pathology Day was attended by members of the College, medical professionals, and guest speakers including journalist Sandra Sully and Greater Western Sydney Giants player Sam Reid.

The College also announced four new position statements on International Pathology Day, with three covered this edition:

- Annual pathology testing in adult diabetes care.
- Patient expectations of pathologists.
- Serum Tumour Marker requesting, testing and reporting of results.

Check out our [Facebook](#) page and follow our CEO Dr Debra Graves (@DebraJGraves) or the College (@PathologyRCPA) on [Twitter](#) to keep up to date with pathology news and to see what events happened on International Pathology Day.

## Interesting Facts

10

The number of countries where the fourth International Pathology Day was celebrated on November 16, 2016.

4

The number of new position statements released by the RCPA on International Pathology Day.

170

The number of promotional packs sent out by the RCPA to help hospitals, collection centres, laboratories and university medical schools celebrate International Pathology Day.

Source: RCPA

## Footballer Sam Reid celebrated International Pathology Day with personal tribute to pathology



Sam Reid

The RCPA celebrated the fourth International Pathology Day on November 16 with a variety of guest speakers, including Greater Western Sydney Giants star Sam Reid, who shared their own stories about why pathology is important to them. New position statements were also released on a range of topics, including potentially game-changing care sets for diabetes monitoring.

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## New diabetes 'care sets' could prevent complications and save money

Monitoring chronic diseases such as diabetes is important for effective treatment and prevention of complications. Clinician's practices in requesting tests to monitor diabetes vary considerably though, and many patients are under-monitored. In response to this situation, the RCPA released a new position statement on International Pathology Day detailing guidelines for a defined list of pathology tests required to monitor diabetes effectively.



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## Lay Committee helped the College identify the ideal pathologist

If you could design your ideal pathologist, what attributes would you give them? This was the task handed to the RCPA's Lay Committee, and the final list forms the basis of a new position statement titled *Patient Expectations of Pathologists* and released by the RCPA on International Pathology Day.

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## New position statement aims to reduce patient harm from inappropriate tumour marker testing

Research that revealed New Zealand had pipped Australia for the highest per capita rate of melanoma has prompted more people to have their moles checked. That's good news for public health, but an often-invisible downstream effect is the sudden increase in skin biopsies that must be interpreted by anatomical pathologists.



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## Previous Editions



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- Cancer Australia Statement provides 12 reasons to put breast cancer management under the microscope
- HTLV-1 virus needs awareness raising to uncover its risks to Indigenous health
- Emergent meat allergy is

### Welcome to the October edition of ePathWay

Cancer Australia has harnessed the collective knowledge of 11 clinical colleges, cancer and consumer organisations to launch a new statement titled [Cancer Australia Statement - Influencing best practice in breast cancer](#) on this year's Pink Ribbon Day. The Statement outlines 12 practices that are either appropriate or inappropriate for providing patient-centred breast cancer care in Australia, and our College had a seat at the table when it was being developed.

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## Footballer Sam Reid celebrated International Pathology Day with personal tribute to pathology



The RCPA celebrated the fourth International Pathology Day on November 16 with a variety of guest speakers, including Greater Western Sydney Giants star Sam Reid, who shared their own stories about why pathology is important to them. New position statements were also released on a range of topics, including potentially game-changing care sets for diabetes monitoring.

"International Pathology Day is a day to celebrate pathology including what it brings to the health care table and what pathologists do. It is also a truly international event with celebrations in the UK, the USA, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, South Africa and Ireland," says Dr Debra Graves, CEO of the RCPA.

In our corner of the world, journalist Sandra Sully, MC for the College's event, used the opportunity to discuss the value of pathology with the guests.

"Pathology plays such an important role in the health and wellbeing of every Australian by assisting in diagnosing and treating disease. By discussing the value pathology plays in the lives of Australians we can create a path to improving early detection of disease, and in turn, save lives," she explained.

Sam Reid shared his personal experience of living with Type 1 diabetes, and the value that pathology has had in his diagnosis and treatment.

"When I was first diagnosed with diabetes, I was oblivious to what it meant



for me. My main concern was whether I could still play football and the impact this would have on my life. After numerous tests, a confirmed diagnosis and almost seven years of managing the disease, I now try to be an advocate for those living with diabetes. My key message is to not be ashamed, stay in control, be happy, healthy and active and utilise the professionals around you who want to lend a helping hand," he said.

*Sandra Sully*

Mr Reid's story was timely, as one of the position statements released on the day related to new 'care sets' for diabetes monitoring. The other position statements released were Serum Tumour Marker requesting, testing and reporting of results, Genetic testing for *5,10-methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase* (MTHFR) and patient expectations of pathologists.

"Pathology is a pivotal part of health care. It diagnoses almost 70% of diseases and all cancers, and guides treatment for a significant number of people. It's certainly worth celebrating the value it brings to society and the difference it makes to so many people's lives," says Dr Graves.

The position statements [Annual pathology testing in adults diabetes care](#), [Serum Tumour Marker Requesting, Testing and Reporting of Results](#), and [Patient Expectations of Pathologists](#) are covered in this issue of ePathWay.

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## New diabetes 'care sets' could prevent complications and save money



Monitoring chronic diseases such as diabetes is important for effective treatment and prevention of complications. Clinician's practices in requesting tests to monitor diabetes vary considerably though, and many patients are under-monitored. In response to this situation, the RCPA released a new position statement on International Pathology Day detailing guidelines for a defined list of pathology tests required to monitor diabetes effectively.

In the position statement, the RCPA recommends an annual monitoring care set for adult stable diabetes that includes tests for creatinine, cholesterol, triglycerides; HDL cholesterol; Microalbumin; and HbA1c.

"The increasing prevalence of diabetes is a global phenomenon marked by known high rates of morbidity and mortality. According to Diabetes Australia, 1.7 million Australians already have a diagnosis of diabetes, with a further half a million having undiagnosed diabetes and two million with pre-diabetes. Pathology plays a vital role in monitoring glycaemic control in diabetes and assists clinicians in treating the disease and preventing complications," explained RCPA President Dr Michael Harrison.

"Despite this, there is considerable variation in the requesting practices of those caring for these patients. Studies show that many patients are under-monitored leading to poor glycaemic control and the development of complications leading to increased morbidity and mortality. The number of preventable hospitalisations related to mismanagement of diabetes, in Australia currently, accounts for approximately 14% of the total number of these cases."

Dr Harrison explained that non-compliance with annual or three to six monthly testing is very common.

"It has previously been estimated that non-compliance with current recommendations for the monitoring of Diabetes Mellitus occurs 25% to 50% of the time. Under-monitoring leads to poorer control and higher complication rates. Compliance with the

RCPA's guidelines should improve patient care and free up healthcare funds of \$2,600-\$5,300 per person per year.”

The number of Australians living with diabetes is forecast to rise to 3.5 million in 2033, resulting in a rise in the annual cost of diabetes of in the annual cost of diabetes to also rise to almost \$6 billion per year. Through better diabetes control, a 1% reduction in HbA1c in all diabetes will lead to a reduction in these diabetic complications over five years of end stage kidney disease by 40%; lower limb amputation by 21%; advanced eye disease by 43%; and heart attack by 16%.

You can view the full [position statement](#) on the RCPA website.

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## Lay Committee helped the College identify the ideal pathologist



If you could design your ideal pathologist, what attributes would you give them? This was the task handed to the RCPA's Lay Committee, and the final list forms the basis of a new position statement titled *Patient Expectations of Pathologists* and released by the RCPA on International Pathology Day.

"Our committee was asked to come up with a checklist that outlines patients' expectations of pathologists and the pathology profession," explains Lay Committee Chair Andrea Plawutsky who, along with fellow Lay Committee member and Forensic Pathologist Dr Melissa Baker, spoke about this position statement at the College's International Pathology Day celebration last week.

"Its purpose is to provide a framework for consideration during the development and revision of the future curricula for the training of new and current pathologists, and it was developed in close collaboration with the College Board."

The position statement recommends that pathologists:

1. Demonstrate and maintain competence.
2. Be respectful of patients.
3. Treat specimens respectfully.
4. Foster constructive collegiality and teamwork within the laboratory.
5. Be part of the medical team looking after patients.
6. Provide accurate and timely results.
7. Be professional in their approach.
8. Be involved in appropriate accreditation and quality activities.

9. Provide value for public and private expenditure.

“We wanted a list that was explicitly articulated so that it could be adhered to. It looks simple, but when you consider the range of attributes it covers it’s actually quite comprehensive. I am particularly pleased with point number eight because the commitment to ongoing education is very important, particularly in the era of genetics,” explains Ms Plawutsky.

Dr Baker has battled Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, so she addressed the position statement from both a pathologist’s and patient’s perspective.

“I only recently joined the Lay Committee and this position statement was already completed, but I found the points to be relevant and sensible, and representative of what the community should expect of pathologists and what pathologists should be expected to deliver to the community,” she says.

“Point number six particularly resonated with me. I have required a lot of pathology tests during my battle with lymphoma; in fact, I have been completely reliant on them, beginning with the diagnosis. There have been occasions when a radiology test might pick up something but we wouldn’t know for sure if it was lymphoma or not until I had a biopsy that was interpreted by a pathologist.”

“It was the pathologist who always gave me the definitive and accurate answers about my cancer. I certainly relied on pathology, sometimes even to see if I could have treatment on a particular day, and timely results were so important because it can be very stressful waiting for results.”

Dr Baker said points two and five were also poignant to her because she relied on the expertise of her haematologist.

“Not many people think of pathologists as seeing patients, but they do. For example, haematologists, who are Fellows of the RCPA, are at the front end seeing patients while other pathologists are doing equally important work behind the scenes as part of the medical team looking after a patient.”

You can view the full [position statement](#) on the RCPA website.

Dr Melissa Baker’s battle with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma was covered in the [July 2015](#) and [April 2014](#) editions of ePathWay.

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## New position statement aims to reduce patient harm from inappropriate tumour marker testing



A new position statement released on International Pathology Day titled *Serum Tumour Marker Requesting, Testing and Reporting of Results* may be aimed at clinicians, but its purpose is to reduce the risk to patients of inappropriate testing.

Dr Michael Harrison, President of the RCPA, says the new statement guides both the clinicians who initiate testing and receive reports for serum tumour markers, and the pathology practices that perform and report these tests.

“Importantly, every patient must be treated as an individual and therefore the RCPA encourages the use of this position statement by those who are requesting and interpreting tumour markers as a starting point in order to determine the best course of action for each patient,” he explains.

“In general, the best validated use is for monitoring of a known tumour. Measurement of tumour markers for case finding or diagnosis should only be done by those knowledgeable in the field.”

“We have also outlined when tumour marker testing is not recommended. For anyone at low risk, there is a greater likelihood that raised tumour marker levels are associated with non-malignant conditions so that abnormal test results may not only generate additional anxiety but lead to further unnecessary and costly investigations,” says Dr Harrison.

The guidelines outline recommendations for requesting, testing and reporting of serum tumour markers, and not those assayed in urine, tissue or cells.

“The selection of tumour marker tests is generally determined by the malignant condition present. The selection of an appropriate tumour marker, however, should not necessarily be restricted according to the primary tissue or organ site involved as the measurement of other markers may be useful for identifying the presence of malignancy,” explains Dr



Harrison.

You can view the full [position statement](#) on the RCPA website.

Tumour markers were covered in the [June 2012](#) edition of ePathWay.

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