

Consumer representative: Tom Haswell

Date of meeting: 30th March 2017

Event name: Visit to Diagnostic Pathology Laboratories, Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Glasgow.

All areas of the laboratories were open to me and all staff made me most welcome. It was a most enjoyable, informative, educational day.

The day started with informal discussion which was then followed by an initial tour of pathology laboratories, explaining and showing the specimen journey from patient to pathology, how the specimen is directed to the appropriate area and how there is an acquisition of tissue for research. It was most appropriate that at this time a pathologist was slicing a lung lobe and she took the time to explain to me what she was doing, why, and what she was looking for. This was followed by being shown the process of formalin fixed-paraffin embedding and how the “cassette” was sliced for microscope inspection. There was then the opportunity to look through the microscope looking for evidence of breast cancer.

During lunch there was further opportunity to have discussions with several members of staff, very informative and interesting and in a very relaxed atmosphere.

After lunch it was the molecular genetics laboratory being shown fish testing and gene sequencing.

Such was the day that it is maybe a bit unfair to highlight one particular part, but I have to say that looking down the microscope, being directed to what to look for on different slides to confirm a diagnosis of breast cancer, then to try to confirm a lung cancer which turned out to metastases from colon cancer, made me really appreciate that no matter how much scientific and technology equipment may be available, it gets down to what the eye of the pathologist sees on the slide and this comes from experience, knowledge and expertise.

I feel that this experience will give me a better understanding of what pathology involves and hopefully I can contribute positively as a consumer member of CM-Path.

I believe cancer research will benefit providing it is realised that pathology is a vital and integral part of cancer research and early input from pathologists in clinical trials is important, perhaps more so now in the era of precision and targeted medicines and next generation sequencing.

I felt that the pathologists appreciated the requirement of consumer involvement and I hope my visit underlined how we consumers understand the importance of pathology involvement in all aspects of cancer research.

I believe that NCRI can contribute to this by ensuring all appropriate clinical study groups (CSGs) and other NCRI initiatives include pathology.