

The UEMS Section/Board of Pathology, Chapter 6: Requirement for Recognition of Postgraduate Training in Pathology: a presentation of the Paris Document

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The UEMS Section/Board of Pathology, Chapter 6: Requirement for Recognition of Postgraduate Training in Pathology: a presentation of the Paris Document

After more than five years discussion the UEMS Section/Board of Pathology agreed a specification of requirements for recognition of post-graduate training in pathology, which is the key to the future of our discipline. The document published here, subject to ratification by UEMS Council, was voted on and accepted by the Pathology Board at the UEMS Paris meeting of 9 June 2012. Cytopathology is regarded as integral part of pathology: in general, training in pathology takes five years and maintains a common trunk of four (minimum three) years where surgical pathology, autopsy pathology and basic knowledge of neuropathology, dermatopathology and cytopathology are adequately trained and assessed. Training in so-called 'areas of interests' covers the remaining 12–24 months. Certificates of 'advanced level of competence' remain within the authority of national boards.

As senior members of its Executive Board, we believe that the European Federation of Cytology Societies (EFCS) should take responsibility for establishing 1) *standards* in the quality of cytopathology training, 2) *training guidelines* and qualification for advanced levels of competence in cytopathology, 3) *manpower planning*, 4) *tutorials* for pathologists and cytotechnologists and 4) *standards of cytotechnologist training*.

Keywords: European Union of Medical Specialists, EFCS, cytology, pathology, training

Introduction

During a period of more than five years, the participants of the Pathology Section of the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) engaged in a series of lively discussions about the emerging role of pathology in modern medicine, and came to the conclusion that specification of requirements for recognition of post-

graduate training in pathology is the key to the future of our discipline.

Thus, a training charter had to be established fulfilling several criteria: (1) to set standards in the training of pathology, (2) to respect future developments such as the integration of molecular pathology, (3) to allow young pathologists to be trained and/or work all over the European Union, without limitation by the chosen training facility and (4) to re-integrate disciplines such as neuropathology, dermatopathology and cytopathology in pathology, in order to join forces in the fields of diagnosis and research as well as the application of specific methods and technology.

Finally, a revision of the document was voted on and accepted at the 9 June 2012 UEMS meeting in

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Figure 1. After the Paris meeting, photograph taken by Ambrogio Fassina.

Paris (Figure 1). As already mentioned in the letter published in *Cytopathology*,¹ cytopathology is regarded as integral part of pathology and well-trained pathologists must be able to cover basic diagnosis in gynaecological and non-gynaecological cytology. In general, training in pathology takes 5 years and it maintains a common trunk where surgical pathology, autopsy pathology and basic knowledge of neuropathology, dermatopathology and cytopathology are adequately taught and assessed. Duration of the common trunk is regulated at a minimum of 3, but preferably 4 years. Training in so-called 'areas of interests' (cytopathology, neuropathology, dermatopathology and others) can cover the remaining 12–24 months. However, after the general training period, pathologists who desire to increase their level of expertise will aim for 'advanced level of competence' certificates, whose recognition remains within the authority of national boards. Following this structure, isolated specialization in parts of pathology such as cytology (Croatia or Greece) or neuropathology (UK) can be avoided, and the misnomer 'subspecialty of cytopathology' will be omitted (e.g. Austria or Germany, where gynaecological cytology is also done by gynaecologists).

Here is the text of the document approved by the Pathology Board, with two abstentions but no dissenters. Following ratification by the UEMS Council in October 2012, the document will be published on the UEMS website: <http://www.europathol.org/>. The Board unanimously agreed at the meeting in Paris to publish the Chapter in a pathology journal as soon as

possible and there was no disagreement with our proposal to publish it in *Cytopathology* on behalf of the European Federation of Cytology Societies (EFCS). The following text is quoted directly from the agreed document and is published with the agreement of the UEMS secretary with the understanding that it is subject to ratification by Council:

**UEMS Section/Board of Pathology
(9 June 2012, Paris)
Chapter 6, Requirement for Recognition of
Post-Graduate Training in Pathology**

6.1. Preamble

- 6.1.1. The purpose of Pathology is to diagnose diseases with respect to their classification, aetiology, pathogenesis and their clinicopathological behaviour, and the evaluation of diagnostic and prognostic methods as well as the effects of therapeutic interventions by morphological and functional examination of cell and tissue samples from gross examination to the molecular lab, including conventional and advanced microscopy and supporting techniques of molecular pathology to demonstrate expression of genes and gene products. The pathologist offers advice and support to fellow clinicians for the benefit of individual patients, the improvement of the quality of diagnostic methods and a better clinicopathological understanding of disease.
- 6.1.2. Pathology encompasses knowledge of surgical pathology and autopsy pathology. Neuropathology, dermatopathology and cytopathology are regarded as integral parts of pathology and basic knowledge is mandatory. Advanced levels of competences in neuropathology, cytopathology and others can be obtained by adequate training and assessment.
- 6.1.3. This training charter provides guidance and quality standards for recognition of training programs in Pathology of EU/EFTA [European Union/European Free Trade Association] member states.
- 6.1.4. It is of prime importance to guarantee efficient, safe and high-quality healthcare. In addition to academic qualifications pathologists, in their work, must also ensure patient safety.
- 6.1.5. With increasing mobility of both patients and doctors across the continent of Europe, professional qualifications must be of equal standing across the European Community. The aim of this charter is to provide a set of minimum standards by which individual national training programmes can be judged.
- 6.1.6. The UEMS Section/Board of Pathology recommends both the harmonization of postgraduate training in Pathology in the EU/EFTA member states and the

processes of recognition and accreditation of training programs in those member states. Completion of training is foreseen after a minimum period of five - years, on a full-time basis, or the equivalent if training is less than full time, the common trunk preferably being four years, but a minimum of three years. If the requirements cannot be fulfilled in one department of Pathology, a rotation to another recognized training centre of Pathology is warranted.

- 6.1.7. This charter does not replace the national guidelines for training but defines the suggested minimal requirements for adequate training in Pathology.

6.2. Article 1: Central Governing Authority for Pathology Training at EC Level:

- 6.2.1. The UEMS Section/Board of Pathology is the governing authority for Pathology in the EU.
- 6.2.2. The national professional body of Pathology, in collaboration with the national medical specialist organization, is responsible for formulating general standards for recognition of training programs and institutions in Pathology.
- 6.2.3. The national bodies referred to in Article 6.2.2 are also responsible for the execution of a program for quality assurance of training in Pathology.
- 6.2.4. The UEMS Section/Board of Pathology will set standards for recognition of the quality of Pathology training in each EU country.
- 6.2.5. The system of manpower planning in Pathology in each EU country is evaluated or established by organizations mandated by the UEMS Section of Pathology.

6.3. Article 2: General Aspects of Training in Pathology

- 6.3.1. Training in the specialty must follow a nationally approved curriculum.
- 6.3.2. Trainees should be appointed to recognized training positions in recognized training programs.
- 6.3.3. The duration of the training in Pathology is five years on a full-time basis, or the equivalent if training is less than full-time.
- 6.3.4. Training should comprise a common trunk that will typically include a major component of general pathology training, together with a period of special training in an area of interest, or general further training in depth.
- 6.3.5. Individual training programs of trainees in Pathology departments within an individual nation should be approved by the national medical specialist organizations detailed in 1.2.
- 6.3.6. An individual trainee's training activities should be regularly assessed using a personal training record (portfolio), kept and maintained by the trainee,

which details specific training activities performed by the trainee.

- 6.3.7. The quality of training programs and departments should be regularly assessed in a process overseen by the national medical organization.
- 6.3.8. Manpower planning should ideally be executed by national bodies that involve the national professional organization that subsequently informs the UEMS Section/Board of Pathology in order to be able to evaluate trends within the EU.
- 6.3.9. There will be national variations in curricula, assessment and examinations. However, where equivalence between training programs in EU nations can be demonstrated at an appropriate stage there may be opportunities for trainees to spend periods of their training in other EU nations.

6.4. Article 3: Requirements for Training Programs and Institutions

- 6.4.1. The training program in the Pathology department and the corresponding hospital as training institution should be based on the national curriculum and be recognized by the national medical specialist organization.
- 6.4.2. The training program should encompass training opportunities to meet the requirements of the curriculum. Training should take place in recognized training departments. Secondment to other programs or departments may be necessary to meet the requirements of the curriculum.
- 6.4.3. Individual training departments should be quality assured.

6.5. Article 4: Requirements for Trainers and Teachers in Pathology

- 6.5.1. The individual program should be led by a program director, who should have undertaken basic training in the provision of postgraduate training and education.
- 6.5.2. An individual training department should have a chief or lead for training in that department.
- 6.5.3. All trainers and teachers should be encouraged to undertake training in the provision of postgraduate training and education
- 6.5.4. The chief of training and/or program director should work out a training programme for each trainee in accordance with the trainee's own qualities and needs and the possibilities of the institution and which also complies with national rules and EC directives and considers UEMS Section/Board of Pathology recommendations.
- 6.5.5. The ratio between the number of qualified pathologists in the teaching staff and the number of trainees should provide a close personal monitoring of the

trainee during his/her training and provide adequate exposure of the trainee to the training.

6.6. Article 5: Requirements for Trainees

- 6.6.1. The trainee should be registered as a medical doctor.
- 6.6.2. A trainee entering specialist training should meet the person specification which determines the requirements for entry to the specialty training program in the nation.
- 6.6.3. The trainee should maintain general medical registration, should maintain Good Medical Practice and should register as a trainee with the national professional body.
- 6.6.4. The trainee should have adequate linguistic ability to communicate with fellow physicians, laboratory staff and other personnel involved, and to study international literature and communicate with foreign colleagues.
- 6.6.5. The trainee should keep their own personal training record up to date according to national rules and EC directives as well as considering UEMS Section/Board of Pathology recommendations.

6.7. Article 6. Requirements for the Curriculum and Training Programs

- 6.7.1. The trainee should satisfactorily complete training in core aspects of Pathology, which are outlined in their national curriculum, approved by the UEMS Board of Pathology, to include:
 - Basic knowledge and skills
 - Clinical histopathology including surgical pathology, autopsy and cytopathology.
 - Areas of pathology in which more extensive knowledge, skills and expertise is required, may include areas such as cytopathology, dermatopathology, forensic pathology, neuropathology and paediatric pathology.
- 6.7.2. The guidelines for training in additional qualifications in Pathology are evaluated or established by organizations mandated by the UEMS Section/Board of Pathology.
- 6.7.3.
 - a) *basic*:
 - experience of the interpretation of diagnostic techniques required to achieve competence
 - experience of the use of relevant equipment used in histopathology
 - knowledge of the principles of other relevant areas such as biochemistry, epidemiology, genetics and medical statistics
 - b) *specific*:
 - to gain deepened knowledge in pathology in general, which includes autopsy pathology, histopathology,

- cytopathology including fine-needle aspiration cytology and molecular pathology, as well as histochemistry, immunohistochemistry and ultrastructural pathology
 - the acquisition of the ability to assess morphological changes in cells, tissue and organs and to appreciate their pathogenetic and clinical implications
 - to gain general and systematic knowledge of disease processes, tumours and transplantation in areas such as cardiovascular pathology, dermatopathology, digestive pathology, endocrine pathology, gynaecopathology, immunology, neuropathology and paediatric pathology, in order to be able to provide specialist advice
- c) *complementary*: to gain adequate knowledge in areas such as epidemiology, ethics, forensic medicine, imaging diagnostics, medical genetics and toxicology
 - d) *obligatory professional activities*:
 - have the ability to recognize and work within personal limits of competence
 - have knowledge of and participate in internal and external quality control in all appropriate aspects of pathology
 - attend appropriate accredited meetings and courses as part of a program of continuing professional development (CPD)
 - acquire life-long habits of reading and competence for critical evaluation of the literature
 - have knowledge of the use of informatics in diagnostic pathology
 - acquire the ability to integrate clinical data with the pathological diagnosis and provide useful prognostic and therapeutic suggestions and advice
 - acquire necessary competencies in autopsy pathology
 - acquire skills for organizing and managing clinicopathological conferences and multi-disciplinary team meetings
 - undertake the macroscopic examination and sampling of sufficient surgical specimens so as to acquire the competencies necessary for independent specialist practice
 - acquire a knowledge of the principles of management necessary in providing an effective service
 - acquire an understanding of the use of laboratory equipment and procedures
 - acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to set up and use a microscope and have an appreciation of different forms of microscopy
 - acquire an understanding of the methods used to prepare histological slides
 - acquire an understanding of histochemical and immunohistochemical techniques
 - undertake the microscopical examination of sufficient histopathological samples, covering all or most topics of pathology (cf. See 6.7.3.b), with increasing autonomy in the diagnosis, so as to acquire the appropriate competencies necessary for independent specialist practice

- undertake the microscopical examination of sufficient cytopathology samples, including gynaecological and non-gynaecological (fine-needle and other) samples so as to acquire the appropriate competencies necessary for independent specialist practice
 - acquire the ability to evaluate additional investigative methods, such as histochemical and immunohistochemical stains and molecular methods, to support the pathological diagnosis
 - acquire the ability to integrate molecular data with morphological findings to achieve a conclusive diagnosis
 - examine sufficient frozen sections to acquire the appropriate competencies necessary for independent specialist practice
 - acquire the ability to evaluate organs before and after transplantation
- e) *elective activities*: could include additional training such as laboratory techniques, screening of diseases, research methodology, tissue banking and data collection

Discussion

As mentioned initially, this training charter is the result of more than five years of discussion. In most European countries the charter will not provoke significant changes to cytology training because it is pathologists who practice cytology. In a few countries, however, such as Greece and Croatia, where cytology is practiced as a separate discipline, the consequences will include reflections about the future roles of cytologists and pathologists and the respective reasons for differentiating between them.

The result of the voting represents that general feeling. Some countries may encounter difficulty meeting the guidelines as presented in this document, to the extent that just two felt it necessary to abstain, and the members of the Board are fully aware that such guidelines would have to be taken in the context of local circumstances. Thus, in paragraph 6.1.7 it is clearly stated, that this charter does not replace the national guidelines for training, but defines the suggested minimal requirements for adequate training in Pathology.

After these relevant conclusions and in respect of this development, as members of the EFCS we believe that in the next few years our organization should take the responsibility for the definition of

- 1 *Standards* in order to recognize that the quality of cytopathology training is fulfilled in each EU country,
- 2 *Training guidelines* in additional levels of qualification; in fact the advanced level of competence in cytopathology will have to be established and evaluated by EFCS, according to a UEMS mandate,
- 3 *Manpower planning* in cytopathology in each EU country, which will be recognized and/or evaluated by EFCS, according to a UEMS mandate,
- 4 *Tutorials* in cytopathology, such as those suitable for cytotechnologists and pathologists that have been organised by the EFCS for the past five years, and more specific ones aimed at pathologists who report cytology,²
- 5 *Standards of cytotechnologist training*. Although this is not part of the training charter of pathology, we feel it is imperative also to harmonize the training of cytotechnologists and their professional position, for the very same reasons already mentioned for pathologists.

As senior representatives of the EFCS, we believe that these guidelines are the best way for harmonizing Pathology practice in Europe and we do hope that this Chapter will be the starting point for this process.

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Appendix

Participants of the UEMS, Section Pathology - meeting in Paris 2012 C. Barbatis (Greece), B. Bruun Rasmussen (Denmark), N. Büyükbabani (Turkey), Ph. Camparo (France), F. Capron (France), P. Kelly (Ireland), G. Kempny (Germany), J. Kulka (Hungary), J. Pardo (Spain), C. Rygaard (Denmark), S. Seiwert (Croatia), P. Sloomweg (Netherlands), C. Sundström (Sweden), G. Turowski (Norway), M.P. Van Craynest (Belgium), M. Wells (Great Britain) and N. Zidar (Slovenia).