

# Celebrating 40 years of microbiology conferences: a milestone meeting

This year's British Society for Microbial Technology Annual Microbiology Conference will be held on 15 May at the RAF Museum in Hendon, north London, and will cover a range of different topics. Here, *Pathology in Practice* provides the first of two previews of the programme.

The British Society for Microbial Technology (BSMT) is set to host its 40th Annual Conference this year, held at the Royal Air Force (RAF) Museum in Hendon, North London on 15 May. The conference programme promises an exciting and informative day bringing together leading experts, researchers, healthcare scientists and

industry professionals to discuss the latest advancements and challenges in laboratory microbial diagnostics, encouraging the exchange of information on current and future practices in clinical microbiology.

Founded in 1985, by microbiologists with a common interest in antimicrobial susceptibility testing, the BSMT continues

to promote research and development in the UK and beyond. Over the years, it has brought together a diverse community of clinical scientists, microbiologists and biomedical scientists who share a passion for microbiology and understanding microorganisms, and their impact on life, health and the environment. This year's meeting will serve as a celebration of the society's history, achievements, and the significant contributions made by its members.

Now for a detailed look at the day's agenda, showcasing the diverse range of topics and speakers that will be featured. The underlying theme of the morning session is the global threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and the essential role of effective antimicrobial stewardship to guide appropriate antibiotic usage.



BSMT meetings showcase the society's commitment to knowledge exchange in clinical laboratory practice.



Attendees will enjoy a networking lunch while engaging with commercial exhibitors.

### Antimicrobial stewardship

Back in 2020, Professor Paul Dark, National Deputy Medical Director, NIHR Clinical Research Network, described the protocol for a multicentre, randomised clinical trial looking at the use of two inflammatory biomarkers – procalcitonin (PCT) or C-reactive protein (CRP) in the management of hospitalised patients with suspected sepsis. We are looking forward to an update on this vast trial to see if we are any closer to answering the question if critically ill patients receiving IV antibiotic treatment for suspected sepsis, guided by PCT or CRP protocols have a safe reduction in treatment duration compared with standard care. This will be complemented by the insights of Professor Hermine Mkrtychyan, Head of Research, University of West London, who's interests lie with the 'One Health' approach, using novel technologies to analyse the dynamics and interactions of AMR genes between humans, animals and associated environments.

### Overseas issues

Last year, one of the standout sessions of the day was from Ivor Mitchelmore, formerly chief biomedical scientist in microbiology at Luton and Dunstable Hospital, who presented his experience in helping to set up a laboratory from scratch in Khristiya Seva Niketan (KSN) Hospital in West Bengal, India, and the significant impact of implementing a protocol for culture and sensitivity testing of urine, blood cultures and wound swabs.

Following on from that theme we are excited to welcome Dr Alessandra Natale, a research coordinator at Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which provides medical

humanitarian assistance to save lives and ease the suffering of people in crisis situations in over 70 countries world-wide. Dr Natale will share her experience in 'The Mini Lab' field trial which fills a critical gap in low-resource settings to enable the diagnosis of infections in the most remote, challenging, and underserved areas of the world to improve healthcare delivery and surveillance of AMR.

Through the UK Public Health Rapid Support Team (UK-PHRST), the UK has the ability and capacity to rapidly respond to disease outbreaks in low- and middle-income countries around the world. Daniel Carter, genomics specialist at UKHSA Porton Down, will discuss the development of a portable laboratory designed for rapid response to outbreaks. His talk will emphasise the significance of preparedness in public health in tackling disease outbreaks at their source at the earliest possible stage to help prevent their spread, saves lives, and effectively helping to protect the UK.

### Networking opportunities

Attendees will enjoy a networking lunch while continuing to engage with exhibitors in the trade show area. In addition to the informative sessions, the meeting provides ample opportunities to facilitate connections between scientists and companies that offer solutions to the challenges presented and the latest developments in the field.

The afternoon programme will be sure not to disappoint, starting with Dr Alexander Shaw, Imperial College London, whose work focuses on the detection of viruses and bacteria from stool and environmental samples. Dr Shaw will explore wastewater surveillance

for the detection of early pandemic emergence through next-generation sequencing in contributing to enhancing clinical surveillance and public health outcomes.

### Focus on mycology

The final presentation of the day will be delivered by Dr Riina Richardson, Honorary Consultant Mycologist and Senior Clinical Lecturer in Infectious Diseases and Medical Education, Manchester, who is an internationally recognised expert in the field of fungal infectious diseases. The spectrum of fungi causing invasive fungal disease (IFD) is broad and antifungal resistance has shown an upsurge in recent years. With these changing demands, fungal diagnostics has evolved, whilst imaging, culture and microscopy methods are still used, molecular methods for advanced non-culture detection are increasingly being used. Antifungal susceptibility testing of clinically relevant samples is increasingly important to carefully select antifungal therapy, Dr Richardson will enlighten us on cutting-edge advancements in diagnosing invasive and systemic fungal infections. Her expertise will provide critical insights into the importance of accurate diagnosis in effective treatment.

### Looking to the future

The agenda for the day emphasises the essential roles of accurate diagnostics to support antimicrobial stewardship along with global cooperation towards tackling AMR. As the BSMT looks to the future, the 40th meeting will serve as a reminder of the society's commitment to knowledge exchange in clinical laboratory practice, promoting education and supporting the next generation of biomedical and clinical scientists. The discussions and collaborations that take place at this meeting are crucial for driving forward innovations in microbial technology and addressing some of the most pressing issues in public health of our time.

Join us on 15 May at the RAF Museum, Hendon, to be part of this platform to expand your professional network and listen to the latest developments in microbial technology. The BSMT looks forward to welcoming you.

This article was prepared for the BSMT committee by its CPD officer, Carmel Aldridge, AST/AMR portfolio development lead at Mast Group.

For more information on the programme, registration details, and participation, please visit the BSMT website.

 [www.bsmt.org.uk](http://www.bsmt.org.uk)