

FEBRUARY 2024

**REVIEWS OF HDG TRIVIA NIGHT –
THE CASTLE HOTEL**

AIMS AWARD WINNERS

**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PRE-ANALYTICAL
SUPERVISOR**

BENCHPRESS

The official newsletter of The Australian Institute of Medical and Clinical Scientists
(Victoria Branch)

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GOT NEWS TO SHARE?

We would be delighted to share the good things you are doing in the scientific world.

Contact us at secretary.aims.vic@gmail.com or via Facebook (@AIMSVictorianBranch) to let us know.

The submission deadline for next issue of Benchpress is 31 September 2024.

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings colleagues and welcome to 2024!

In 2023, AIMS Vic Branch orchestrated a series of successful events. I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the committed committee members who generously dedicated their time to curate these occasions. The planning and execution of events ranging from haematology and biochemistry workshops to microbiology sessions, not to mention the engaging trivia nights and insightful career gatherings, are truly commendable.

In the latter part of 2023, we bid farewell to two committee members, Claire Gregory and John Abcede. Claire served as the Secretary since 2020, and John joined the committee in 2021, both playing pivotal roles in organising our microbiology and biochemistry meetings. While parting ways, we look forward to future collaborations in upcoming events.

Simultaneously, we extend a warm welcome to our new committee members, Pramod, Nao, Jack, and Alejandra, who joined us in late 2023. Their fresh perspectives will undoubtedly enrich our team as we embark on the journey of planning and executing events for 2024.

Keep an eye out for our forthcoming events, including the careers night and workshops on biochemistry, haematology, and morphology scheduled for the first half of the year. To ensure you don't miss out, we encourage you to register early. Stay updated on all the latest developments by following us on Facebook.

Congratulations to our distinguished 2023 award recipients of the Young Scientist of the Year, George Milsom and the George Swanson Christie memorial awards. It was truly gratifying to have the opportunity to present these accolades in person once again.

As we find ourselves almost in March, let us seize the moment and embark on a year filled with accomplishments.



Tina Pham
Chair
AIMS VIC Branch

2023 HDG TRIVIA NIGHT – THE CASTLE HOTEL

By Nao Shimada Ramos & Jack Opelanio (Students, Master of Laboratory Medicine, RMIT University)



Pictures from the 2023 HDG Trivia Night.

On Tuesday, November 28th, 2023, another successful HDG Trivia Night was held at the Castle Hotel in North Melbourne. It was a spectacular gathering of nearly 100 trivia fans from Royal Melbourne Hospital, St Vincent’s Hospital Melbourne, Monash Health, Victorian Heart Hospital, Northern Health, Cabrini Health, Austin Health, Box Hill Hospital, Royal Children’s Hospital and RMIT.

The event began with a casual networking session over drinks, setting the tone for an energetic and welcoming night. The trivia competition itself covered an array of topics, from music and sports to entertainment and our beloved Melbourne. The cryptic crosswords on haematology deserve special mention—they were a true brain teaser and a highlight of the evening. Have you heard of the Princess Theatre’s ghost story about Federici? It is my sincere wish that the “Dementors” swooping above us in “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child” were merely stage sets.

Excitement was in the air as the competition went underway, with everyone hoping to take home the renowned microscope trophy that proudly displays the names of previous champions on its metal plates. This year, Northern Health triumphed with an impressive score of 57 out of 70, followed by the RMIT teacher team with 48 points. Their victories were a testament to the power of teamwork, knowledge, and strategic thinking.

We are truly grateful to each and every one of you for participating. Your presence and enthusiasm contributed to making the night memorable and joyful. Our deepest gratitude goes out to Tony O’Neill for his skilfully crafted puzzles and other questions, which not only challenged our knowledge but also served to strengthen our team’s bonds.

We’re already looking forward to next year’s Trivia Night, where we can once again share laughs, learn from each other, and celebrate our community’s diverse knowledge and talents. Until then, keep that trivial spirit alive!

2023 NICE CONFERENCE – TWEED HEADS

Demi Robinson (Medical Scientist, Haematology and Blood Bank Laboratory,
Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne)



Pictures from the NICE Conference.

In August I had the privilege of attending the National Immunohaematology Continuing Education (NICE) Conference held at the Twin Towns Conference and Function Centre in Tweed Heads, NSW.

NICE is a weekend-long conference where scientists and blood bank enthusiasts gather from all parts of Australia (and sometimes outside of Australia!) to share their knowledge, experiences and opinions in an informal setting.

Everyone who attends the conference presents a 5-minute talk on anything and everything blood bank-related; from the weird and wonderful antibodies, to MTPs, transfusion reactions, blood management and everything in between. Having a short time allowance for talks means that a diverse range of topics can be covered throughout the duration of the conference and opens up opportunities to stimulate discussion among delegates.

For me, this was my third NICE conference, after I first attended in 2019 and I enjoyed myself so much that it got me coming back for more! One of the highlights of the conference is the dinner that is held on Saturday night, usually coming hand in hand with a dress-up theme; this year's theme being 'A Tale of Two Cities'. It's a great opportunity for everyone to let their hair down for a bit of fun and to mingle with other delegates.

NICE is such a unique meeting that brings a more light-hearted and relaxed atmosphere compared to most other conferences. The smaller cohort and shorter presentations keep things intimate and exciting. I would strongly encourage anyone who has an interest in all things blood bank to give NICE a go, it's an experience you'll never forget!

There are already great things in the works for NICE 2024, which will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the conference. I'm looking forward to what next year has in store!

2023 AIMS (VIC) AWARD WINNERS (1/2)

By Tina Pham (AIMS Chair, Senior Scientist, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne)

The opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of one's professional colleagues is perhaps the most enjoyable task that the Branch committee undertakes. It is with great pleasure that we announce the following award winners for 2023:



Young Scientist Award – Sofia Plymin (Senior Scientist, Blood Bank, Northern Pathology Victoria)

The Young Scientist award, has been presented annually since 2022 and serves as a tribute to recognise scientific endeavour which will likely benefit Medical Laboratory Science in Victoria.

This year, we proudly honour Sofia for her exceptional dedication, extending beyond personal achievements to include impactful mentorship, educational endeavours (presentations at VIDG, NICE, HDG, RCPA), and significant project involvements. Sofia's role in key projects, such as the blood bank laboratory expansion and electronic medical records system development, highlights her substantial influence on advancing laboratory practices. Congratulations to Sofia for embodying the essence of the Young Scientist award, exemplifying individual excellence and broader positive contributions to Medical Laboratory Science. Well-deserved!



George Milsom Memorial Award – Clare Shugg (Senior Scientist, Haematology, Royal Melbourne Hospital)

The George Milsom Memorial has been presented annual since 1982 and stands as a testament to recognise scientific achievement or service in the field of Medical Laboratory Science in Victoria.

Clare, this year's deserving recipient, has served as an inspiration to her peers in the field of haematology, consistently demonstrating excellence. Her profound contributions extend beyond her dedicated work in morphology and special coagulation. Clare has been actively involved in training junior scientific and medical staff, fostering the growth of future professionals. Notably, in addition to her regular duties, Clare conducts weekly teaching sessions focused on morphology and coagulation, offering valuable insights. Her expertise makes her a trusted point of reference for the medical staff, showcasing her commitment to advancing both the field and the individuals she works alongside. Clare's dedication truly embodies the spirit of the George Milsom Memorial Award.

2023 AIMS (VIC) AWARD WINNERS (2/2)



George Milsom Memorial Award – Pramod Subedi (Lecturer, Biochemistry, La Trobe University)

The George Milsom Memorial has been presented annual since 1982. It is awarded to recognise scientific achievement or service in the field of Medical Laboratory Science in Victoria.

Pramod stands as a source of inspiration for fellow medical scientists within the discipline of biochemistry, showcasing continuous excellence in his field.

After completing his PhD, Pramod embarked on a remarkable journey as a postdoctoral research scientist, contributing his expertise to both La Trobe University and the University of Melbourne. Since 2023, he has been deeply engaged in the realms of teaching and research at La Trobe University. In this capacity, Pramod passionately imparts his wealth of knowledge, serving as a beacon of inspiration for the next generation of scientists. His commitment to education and research underscores not only his personal dedication but also his profound impact on shaping the future of scientific inquiry.



George Swanson Christie Award – Denise Jackson (Professor, Laboratory Medicine, RMIT and President, AIMS)

The George Swanson Christie award has been presented annually since 2004 and is offered to an inspirational medical scientist who has shown ongoing excellence in the field of Medical Laboratory Science in Victoria.

In 2023 we proudly acknowledge Denise for her exemplary and inspirational contributions. Since 2010, she has played a pivotal role as Professor and Discipline Leader at RMIT University, dedicating her full-time efforts to advancing education, research, and administration in Medical Laboratory Science and continues to shape the future of the field.

Her remarkable involvement with AIMS includes key roles such as President, Vice President, National Board of Directors member, Victorian Branch Secretary, Scientific Meetings Chair, Saal Foley Lecturer, and active participation in the AIMS Postgraduate Examining Council for Fellowship, Professional, and Membership Exams.

Denise's commitment goes beyond administrative duties, as she delivers presentations and workshops at various scientific meetings, fostering a sense of community and shared knowledge among AIMS members. Internationally, she has served as an external examiner for esteemed institutions in Singapore, Hong Kong, Fiji, and Malaysia, showcasing her dedication to fostering excellence on a global scale.

2023 HAEMATOLOGY DISCUSSION GROUP SUMMARY

By Joe Rigano (Senior Scientist, Northern Pathology Victoria)

The HDG was well supported in 2023 by hosts and attendees on virtual platforms and in person. The presentations were diverse covering all areas of haematology. A huge shoutout to the awesome speakers. We look forward to the offerings in 2024.

Tuesday 16th of May – Royal Melbourne Hospital

Virtual Meeting – 66 Attendees

Dr Alison Slocombe – Novel Coagulation Studies – Are They Worth It?

Gaby Roche – Leaving On A Jet Plane – Meeting An Unwanted Guest

Mary Zmijarevic – Handling The Unwanted Guest

Michael O'Mahoney – The Colour Purple

Clare Shugg – 50 Shades Of Green

Tuesday 13th of June – Royal Children's Hospital (Combined HDG & VIDG)

Virtual Meeting – 90 Attendees

Hayley Martine – Foetal Anaemia detection using Doppler Ultrasound

Amber Cranston – Treatment associated haemolysis in Kawasaki disease - Case Study

Wilbert Tway – Cool Science Fun!

Matthew Archer – MRD assessment in B cell ALL Post Anti-CD19 Therapy

Demi McKee – Bleeding, Bruised and Bereft

Tuesday 18th of July – Monash Health Diagnostic Genomics

Virtual Meeting – 42 Attendees

Tinashe Nhindiri – The utility of conformational testing for thalassaemia

Ibrahim El Deek – The importance of cis/trans configuration in alpha thalassaemia patients

Lily Li – Masking of Hb H disease by co-inheritance of Hb S

Tuesday 15th of August – Northern Pathology Victoria

In Person Meeting – 42 Attendees

Vincent Lu – A curious case of thrombocytopenia

Waleed Al Jazrawi – Elephantiasis nostras verrucosa

Joe Rigano – Inherited protection against malaria

Tuesday 19th of September – Monash Health

Virtual Meeting – 70 Attendees

Dr Alex Murton – Nitrous oxide abuse, hyperhomocysteinaemia and thrombosis

Hanh Dinh – Neonatal haemoglobinopathy case study

Amanda Ellison – CD38 therapy in Blood Bank

Kylie Rushford – Patients on anti-CD47 interfering with routine immunohaematological testing: with added extras

Hamid Qayum – Paediatric haematology case studies

Tuesday 17th of October – Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

In Person & Virtual Meeting – 70 Attendees

Melinda Wu – T-cell Lymphoma 12 colour panel

Sandra True – When Ethnicity becomes a condition

Grant Rowley – Magrolimab: The Peter Mac Haematology experience

Cathy Durkin – Virtual morphology: The field of dreams

Ray Dauer – Viscoelastography Guidelines

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES (1/2)



Pramod Subedi (Lecturer, Biochemistry, La Trobe University)

During my undergraduate studies in medical laboratory science in Nepal, I developed an intense passion for laboratory medicine. This academic experience and my work in a pathology lab ignited my curiosity in laboratory medicine and opened up opportunities for further research endeavours overseas. Consequently, I moved to Australia, where I pursued and completed a Master's and a PhD in Biochemistry and Genetics at La Trobe University.

Following my postdoctoral research at La Trobe University, I began working at the BIO21 Institute of Molecular Science and Biotechnology at the University of Melbourne, focusing on studying ABC transporters found in bacterial pathogens. My research yielded crucial insights into bacterial pathogenesis, resulting in research articles published in prominent journals such as the Journal of Biological Chemistry and Antioxidant and Redox Signaling.

Bridging research and education, I returned to La Trobe University in 2023 as a Lecturer in Biochemistry, where I have had the privilege of sharing my expertise and passion for laboratory sciences with the next generation of scientists. I am very excited to join the AIMS Vic branch committee and have the opportunity to contribute to and learn from the laboratory medicine community.



Nao Shimada Ramos (Student, Masters of Laboratory Medicine, RMIT University)

My name is Nao, and I am currently in my first year of the Master of Laboratory Medicine programme at RMIT University. I previously earned my Bachelor from Kobe University and gained valuable experience working as a medical laboratory scientist in various laboratories and a medical equipment company back in Japan. My passion lies in using my expertise to positively influence patient care and enhance healthcare outcomes. Now, I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to the medical field in Australia.

Outside of my professional interests, I enjoy travelling, eating, and meeting new people. I have a particular fondness for Japanese sake and am always keen on learning new things.

Currently, I am interested in the Chinese board game, GO, and the Japanese raft, Tsumami Zaiku.

I am deeply honoured and enthusiastic about joining the Victorian Branch AIMS committee as a student representative. My primary goal is to actively promote AIMS events among other students and work towards strengthening connections within the laboratory science community!

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES (2/2)



Alejandra Retamoza Modoo (Student, Bachelor of Laboratory Medicine Honours, RMIT University)

My name is Alejandra and I am currently in my second year of laboratory medicine.

I am excited to be a part of the Victorian Branch AIMS committee and provide my perspective as a student representative. I feel deeply honoured to represent the laboratory medicine student body by embracing new responsibilities with a commitment to encouraging fellow students to become members of AIMS.

Demonstrating dedication to my career and passions even before graduation has been a key motivator in my decision to join this committee. This committee is made up of professionals from various fields, backgrounds and specialties, providing invaluable opportunities to interact, learn and expand my knowledge within the field.

I believe learning during and after studies is vital not only for one's advancement in their knowledge and career but insightful as the medical science field is constantly evolving. This is why I wish to promote meetings and events on behalf of AIMS. The more members we can encourage to sign up, the more opportunities and events the committee can hold to further ensure the provision of quality in medical science services.

I believe current medical laboratory students are the face of science in the coming years, hence my objective is to actively promote the impactful initiatives undertaken by AIMS.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PRE-ANALYTICAL SUPERVISOR: RYAN BOLGER



What can you tell me about your current role as a Pre-Analytical Support Supervisor?

As the Pre-Analytical Support Supervisor, I work to assist the pre-analytical areas of the business in their routine operation. This includes the pathology collection team, the client services team, and the Specimen Reception teams. I'm responsible for investigating issues that occur and looking at the broader process to determine where we may have fallen short and what we could do to prevent that in the future.

What did you do to get into this role?

I graduated with my medical science degree like

so many do, but I actually worked in Pathology for a number of years before I graduated. When I did graduate, I was employed straight away as a scientist and was able to hone experience from Private Pathology (pre-analytical), manufacturing (blood products), and public pathology (scientific) to provide a really well-rounded skill base. One that sees me now providing advice to many parties about pathology.

Can you describe your typical work day?

The highlights of a typical work day is when I am My days often don't have a lot of structure, I spend most of my days investigating problems and organising reviews of processes in the pre-analytical space. I spend a lot of my time liaising with staff in different teams, trying to gather as much information as possible to ensure any new processes account for all possible scenarios.

What would you say are the highlights of your day?

The highlights of my day are when I've been able to investigate an issue that most people have been stumped on for a while, and I'm able to get to the bottom of it. I also thoroughly enjoy the aspect of my role that takes me out to the nursing and medical teams of the hospital. Being able to see the pathology process from a different perspective is always exciting.

What are some of the challenges in your role?

My role can be quite mentally draining. I spend a lot of my day fixing problems and having people approach about problems. When your entire job is dealing with issues and trying to fix them it can become a bit overwhelming and be very easy to lose sight of the all the great things we are able to accomplish in pathology.

What are your interests outside of work?

I have a really strong passion for fitness so you'll often find me in the gym or taking a class somewhere. I work a second job as an indoor cycling instructor in Richmond which takes up a lot of my spare time, by my own choosing. I'm also really into music which goes hand in hand with cycle coaching so I'm always in my headphones listening to new stuff.

BIOCHEMISTRY CROSSWORD

[Answers on page 15]

DOWN

1. A composition of renal calculi
5. A vitamin that may cause immunoassay interference
6. Inclination in calibration curves

ACROSS

2. A technique for separating isoenzymes
3. Biomarker for pancreatitis
4. A cofactor for the transaminases AST and ALT assays
7. A type of trace element

						1												
4																		
			3					6		5								
		2																
										7								

BIOCHEMISTRY QUIZ

[Answers on page 15]

Term	Definition/Process
1. Enzyme	A. An enzyme present in both plants and animals.
2. Insulin	B. Hormone that stimulates red blood cell production in the bone marrow.
3. Liver	C. Converts ammonia into urea in the liver.
4. Amylase	D. One of the vaccine technologies used in the COVID-19 vaccines.
5. PKU	E. Hormone that facilitates glucose uptake by cells.
6. Hemoglobin	F. Disease where you can't eat any milk, meat, or other foods with protein.
7. Urea Cycle	G: Organ producing most of your body cholesterol.
8. Rickets	H: Oxygen transport protein in red blood cells.
9. Erythropoietin	I: Enzyme used as a marker for liver damage.
10. ALT	J: Softening of the bones due to vitamin D deficiency.
11. mRNA	K: Hydrolyzes triglycerides into fatty acids and glycerol.

TRANSFUSION QUIZ

- Which of the following is the guidelines that help govern the operation of a transfusion laboratory in Australia and New Zealand?
 - AS3864
 - ANZSBT
 - PBM
 - CLSI
- How long is a routine Pre-Transfusion Testing Group and Antibody screen valid for?
 - 28 days
 - 168 hours
 - 72 hours
 - 4 days
- What are the three unique identifiers required for patient identification for the purpose of pre-transfusion testing?
 - Full name, date of birth and UR
 - Surname, UR, date of birth
 - First name, Medicare number
 - Laboratory accession number and UR
- The reactivity of blood group A is confirmed by detecting the presence of which immunodominant sugar molecule?
 - N-acetyl-D-neuraminic acid
 - L-fucose
 - N-acetyl-D-galactosamine
 - N-acetyl-D-glucosamine
 - D-galactose
- Which of the following is used to distinguish between the A1 and A2 subgroups?
 - Ulex europaeus*
 - Dolichos biflorus*
 - Vicia graminea*
 - Oxyuranus scutellatus*
- Which antigen does the drug Darzalex target?
 - CD41
 - CD38
 - CD20
 - CD34
- Who is generally known as the father of blood grouping and immunochemistry?
 - Karl Marx
 - Ivan Roitt
 - Karl Landsteiner
 - Robin Coombs
- Which of the following phenotypes is seen more frequently in those of European descent than in those of African descent?
 - Fy(a-b-) phenotype
 - S-s-U phenotype
 - R0 haplotype
 - K+k+ phenotype
- A person with which one of the following red cell phenotypes is expected to be resistant to *Plasmodium vivax* malaria?
 - Fy(a-b-) phenotype
 - Rhnull phenotype
 - McLeod phenotype
 - S-s-U- phenotype
 - Le(a-b-) phenotype
- You are told that a patient has the "McLeod Syndrome". Which of the following is most likely to be TRUE regarding the patient?
 - The patient is susceptible to *Streptococcus* infections
 - The patient has stomatocytes in his peripheral blood smear
 - The patient has increased levels of Kell blood group antigens
 - The patient presents with seizures or involuntary movements
 - The patient has an increased level of Kx antigen in his blood

GET YOURSELF CERTIFIED!



The Australian Council for Certification of the Medical Laboratory Scientific Workforce (CMLS) is a newly created not-for-profit company established to administer the voluntary certification scheme for clinical scientists, medical scientists and technical officers.

WHY BECOME CERTIFIED?

Your status as a certified medical laboratory professional is a public guarantee that you are qualified, competent and continuing your professional development.

- Recognition of scientific qualifications.
- Certification aligned with competency development and assessment processes.
- Acknowledgement of participation in continuing educational activities.
- Increased professional credibility and prestige in the industry.
- Support of industry standards.
- Demonstrated commitment to superior professionalism.
- Potential advantage in the recruitment process.

New applications for certification and renewals are processed by the professional bodies providing CPD. Please contact your relevant association for details.

If you encounter any problems or have any questions, please email: office@cmls.org.au.



Australasian Professional Acknowledgement Continuing Education (APACE) is a voluntary programme that recognises professional activities which contribute to professional growth.

WHY BECOME CERTIFIED?

- Participation in CPD activities demonstrates a commitment to ongoing continuing education and professional development.
- APACE provides formal recognition of activities that may have been pursued on personal basis without recognition – records for a professional development portfolio.
- An APACE Certificate enhances professional profile and is a bonus on a resume.
- Recognition of participation in activities provides encouragement to maintain, improve and extend knowledge and skills for scientific and professional duties.
- CPD is about extending your knowledge and keeping up with, or ahead of, current developments and practices.
- CPD participation ensures a competent workforce and enhanced quality of service for increased confidence of service users.

The programme is open to members of AIMS, AACB, ASM, THANZ, ANZSBT and FSA. APACE participants can lodge applications and activities using the online diary www.apace.org.au.

“As an overseas-trained laboratory professional with a few years of working experience in an Australian laboratory, I felt the need to uplift my professional standing within the industry. Getting certified is one way for me to achieve this and gain more professional credibility. Working in the clinical laboratory means that the majority of the clinical decisions are based upon the results that I as a Medical Scientist produce. With that, I believe it is a personal obligation for me to assure the public that I am capable in my field of work and this certification is a proof my competence. Being part of this also means I am obliged to participate in CPD activities which is important in our field to stay knowledgeable and keep up to date with the latest developments.”

JOHN ABCEDE, CMLS, MAIMS
MEDICAL SCIENTIST
NORTHERN HEALTH

ANSWERS

Biochemistry crossword

DOWN

1. A composition of renal calculi

OXALATE

5. A vitamin that may cause immunoassay interference

BIOTIN

6. Inclination in calibration curves

SLOPE

ACROSS

2. A technique for separating isoenzymes

ELECTROPHORESIS

3. Biomarker for pancreatitis

AMYLASE

4. A cofactor for the transaminases AST and ALT assays

PYRIDOXAL PHOSPHATE

7. A type of trace element

ZINC

Biochemistry quiz

1. *K* 2. *E* 3. *G* 4. *A* 5. *F* 6. *H* 7. *C* 8. *J* 9. *B* 10. *I* 11. *D*

Transfusion quiz

1. *B* 2. *C* 3. *A* 4. *C* 5. *B* 6. *B* 7. *C* 8. *D* 9. *A* 10. *D*

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