The University of Western Australia

SCHOOL OF PATHOLOGY AND LABORATORY MEDICINE

The Minutes of the meeting of the PathWest/PaLM Research Advisory Committee held in the ten Seldam Seminar Room 1.6, First Floor, M Block, The Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre on Thursday, 16 April 2009 from 8.00am to approximately 9.00am.

MINUTES

PRESENT

Winthrop Professor Frank Christiansen (chair), Winthrop Professor Paul Waring, Professor Patricia Price, Dr Adrian Charles, Dr Campbell Witt, Clinical Professor John Burnett, Professor Tom Riley, Mr Brett Tizard, Ms Janette Judge.

APOLOGIES

Adjunct Professor Ursula Kees, Professor Wally Langdon, Adjunct Associate Professor John Beilby

DECLARATIONS OF POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT OR PERCEIVED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

1. MINUTES

The minutes from the March 19th meeting were accepted.

2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 WAIMR representative

Due to conflicts with meeting times, Professor Waring will seek re-nomination from Professor Klinken. It is anticipated that the new delegate will attend the next meeting.

2.2 Progress with research data collection

A snapshot of research across the School & PathWest (6 disciplines and 5 sites) has been collected and collated. Professor Waring to follow up with Microbiology and contact David Smith and Tony Kiel. The detailed information will need to be put into a digestible format so that the diverse and significant projects will be recorded and available for analysis as part of the Research Retreat.

2.3 Statistical support

Information was circulated on the UWA Statistical Consulting Group based in the School of Mathematics and Statistics. The Group offers a fee for service for research projects in addition to a free statistics clinic for postgraduate students. It was felt that there would substantial use of any statistics/bioinformatics facility and there may be a need for the School to have its own in-house resource. Professor Paul Waring asked if anyone was aware of the statistical support centre funded by the Faculty.

Action: Professor Paul Waring to investigate the Faculty-funded services.

2.4 Worldwide University Network collaboration funds

Information was circulated on WUN – Paul Waring discussed fact that UWA formed part of world-wide network of 17 universities and brought to everyone’s attention that up to $20,000 was available to support collaborative programs. Applications close May 1st, 2009. Members identified possible collaborations including Adrian Charles with Bristol University and Frank Christiansen with Seattle and Utrecht. Brett Tizard advised it would be likely that a second round offer would be made at the end of the year and that 3 way collaborations will increase the likelihood of funding.
**Action:** Janette Judge to distribute the WUN document to the Whole of School and Discipline Groups via a general email.

3. **SPECIAL UPDATES ON NEW RESEARCH INITIATIVES**

Paul Waring discussed the importance for the RAC to work with discipline groups to fertilise new initiatives and share more broadly the experience gained. Updates to include illustrative examples.

3.1 **Anatomical Pathology PMH - Wilm’s Tumours**

Adrian Charles has taken on a PhD student, Reena Md Zin, who is an anatomical pathologist being supported by the Malaysian Government. The PhD project will build on Adrian’s existing expertise with Wilm’s Tumours. Seed funding will be provided by the School. This is a possible collaboration with Bristol University funded via the WUN initiatives.

Discussion broadened to include the use of human tissue for research and the need to ensure that all of the PathWest and School collections are covered by the appropriate ethical clearances. Some collections such as those at PMH have consent forms covering the use of material for research but others are not as comprehensive. This item needed further discussion and will be a future agenda item.

3.2 **Haematology QEII - Haemoglobinopathies**

Haematology QEII has a long held interest in haemoglobinopathies and has commenced a project involving 2 PhD students from Saudi Arabia. Scholarships and laboratory support is being provided by the student’s government.

3.3 **Anatomical Pathology QEII - Multiple Sclerosis**

Associate Professor Bob Cook will commence a project investigating the origins of MS. This project is supported by Professor Waring’s establishment grant and not out of School funds. Grants have been submitted to the NH&MRC and SCGH Research Foundation. Associate Professor Bob Cook commences on a fixed term 12 month contract next week. A consortium has been formed with Paul Waring, Bob Cook, Bill Carroll, Vicki Fabian, Martyn French, Jaike Xu and Richard Allcock.

This is an example of an opportunity out of the blue and highlights the way we need to build on untapped interests and opportunities and established collaborations and technology in School.

**Action:** RAC members and their respective research groups need to identify the projects suitable to use School resources for seed funding.

4. **UPDATE FROM EACH OF THE DISCIPLINE GROUPS**

4.1 **Research subgroups.**

There was discussion about the discipline based research groups and how they would feed into the Research Advisory Committee.

**Action:** Adrian Charles to speak with Bastiaan de Boer about plans for Anatomical Pathology research at QEII.

**Action:** Tom Riley to encourage the establishment of the Microbiology research group.

**Action:** Paul Waring will contact John Beilby about reporting to the Committee.
5. **PATHWEST/PALM RESEARCH RETREAT**

Frank Christiansen highlighted that the retreat is an important initiative for the School. It is anticipated that both the Research and Executive Committees will attend with a preference for 40 as maximum number to invite. Friday June 19th 2009 was determined to be the preferred date for Retreat.

**Action:** Janette Judge to contact University Club and reserve suitable seminar room.

It was suggested that invitations be sent out through the research groups calling for expression of interests and requesting overviews from discipline groups to clarify desired outcomes and finalise discussion group topics.

**Action:** Frank Christiansen, Paul Waring, John Burnett and Tom Riley to work offline and meet in next fortnight to start planning and identify invitees.

6. **OTHER BUSINESS**

6.1 Decision-making regarding research support.

Paul Waring solicited guidance from the RAC on how the School should decide which areas of research or individuals to support. The consensus view was that the additional resources provided to rebuild the School should be used to support new initiatives rather than existing activities. There should be equity of opportunity in proposing new initiatives but support should be allocated based on merit and strategic relevance. The RAC will be asked in coming months to make recommendations regarding which areas to develop and support and how much of budget is to be set to research activities. Main problem identified as lack of co-ordination.

6.2 Decision-making regarding infrastructure support.

Paul Waring solicited guidance from the RAC on how the School should decide what infrastructure should be established to support research programs. What proportion of the School’s funds should be used to enhance infrastructure e.g. bioinformatics or platform technologies to enable many research groups vs. used to fund individual researchers?

Discussions are already underway between PaLM, PathWest and WAIMR regarding the lack of bioinformatics support especially for microarray technology. Consideration is being given to the establishment of a Chair of Medical Bioinformatics.

6.3 Building.

Paul Waring advised that there had been considerable changes to the plans for the redevelopment of the QEIIMC campus. As a result of the relocation of PMH to a site close to Winthrop Ave, the School will not be moving into the new PathWest building. The planned refurbishments for laboratories in M Block will begin in the near future.

Frank Christiansen reported on changes to the plans for RPH and the new Fiona Stanley Health Campus. The new Government has announced that there will be substantial changes to the existing plans. The future for the School at RPH and at FSHC is unclear. There are likely to be three PathWest laboratories, with the School having a presence in all three.

6.4 School of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine (RPH Unit) Seminar Series

Professor Price advised that the RPH Unit had commenced hosting a seminar series on Friday afternoons at 4pm.

7. **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday May 21st commencing at 8.00am and will be held in the ten Seldam Seminar Room 1.6, First Floor, M Block, QEIIIMC.