

2022 Report of the activities of the Working Group 'Pathology in favour of developing countries'

By the end of 2022, this Working Group (WG) counts 59 members, many of which coming from underprivileged countries. Even though a slight decrease in the number of members has been observed, it is noteworthy to highlight a high engagement of current members, most actively contributing to shaping the activities of the WG with their suggestions and contributions.

The most significant activity of the WG in 2022 was the organisation of three joint sessions and two poster sessions at the 34th ECP held in Basel, from the 3rd to the 7th of September.

The first was the short course '**COVID-19 in developing countries - another face of the pandemic**', jointly organised with the 'Molecular Pathology' and 'Infectious Diseases' WGs, which was held on the 4th of September. It was really unfortunate that two of the of speakers (from China and Nigeria) cancelled their participation at the last minute due to travel restrictions, therefore there were only two presenters during this session, Prof. Lloyd Mulenga from the Ministry of Health in Zambia, and Prof. Shahid Pervez from Pakistan. In his talk Prof. Mulenga provided an overview of the impact of COVID-19 in Africa, illustrating its impact on the diagnostics and management of infectious and non-infectious diseases, and discussing the regional response to the pandemic. Prof. Pervez's talk illustrated the incredibly good performance of Pakistan in dealing with COVID-19, illustrating what measures were taken by the country, and discussing possible reasons behind the lower morbidity and mortality rates recorded in Pakistan. This talk was followed by a very lively discussion amongst the audience, the speaker and the moderators.

The second joint session, '**Molecular Pathology on a budget**', was organised with the 'Molecular Pathology' WG and was held on the 7th of September. During this session, speakers shared their experience on how to perform molecular diagnostic at low cost. The first speaker was Dr. Rami Mahfouz from Lebanon, who gave a presentation on molecular diagnostics in the era of next-generation sequencing, illustrating how this is possible with a limited budget. Dr. Abdelghani Tbakhi from Jordan then discussed his experience in establishing a haematopoietic stem cell transplantation programme in countries with limited resources, sharing his very successful experience at his own institution. Dr. Lina Carvalho from Portugal gave a very inspiring overview on the importance of carrying molecular pathology in a pathology lab, sharing the experience of her home institution. Dr. Burcin Pehlivanoglou discussed the state-of-the art of carrying out molecular pathology analyses at her home institution in Turkey, focussing on challenges and pitfalls. Dr. Rajiv Kumar Kaushal from India illustrated the current status of molecular testing in India, highlighting challenges and strategies for adopting molecular testing. A lively Q&A session was carried out at the end of the talks.

The last session, '**Joining forces! Improving diagnostic accuracy by telepathology**', was jointly organised with the IT-Computational Pathology WG and was held on the 7th of September. During this session, Prof. Nina Linder from Finland discussed her experience of carrying out digital screening of cervical cancer at the point-of-care working with countries with limited resources. Prof. Catarina Eloy then shared the Portuguese experience on using telepathology model for primary diagnosis as an option to reduce health inequities. Telepathology was also the focus of the talk given by Prof. Peter Fritz from Germany, who illustrated his experience with telepathology in combination with diagnostic assistance systems in countries with restricted resources. Dr. Rajiv Kumar Kaushal from India then shared his experience in digital pathology and artificial intelligence, providing an example from India. Dr. Heather Dawson from Switzerland ended this session by illustrating how joining forces can be done, using as an example what they are doing in Bern. Also this session terminated with a Q&A session, where speakers could address questions from the audience.

At the ECP, this WG also contributed with two poster session, one of which jointly organised with the Autopsy pathology and Infectious diseases pathology WGs, both held on the 7th of September.

An exciting news was the appointment of Prof. Maurizio Martini as Liaison Expert of this WG for ESP educational activities, who will be supported by two additional members of the WG in his role.

- Regarding future activities, the WG has received the approval for two joint sessions for the 35th ECP, to be held in Dublin in September 2023:
- 1. Slide seminar- Pathology in Favour of Developing Countries & Infectious Diseases & Haematopathology WGs. Topic: Pathogen-driven haematological malignancies
- 2. Joint Symposium - Pathology in Favour of Developing Countries & Molecular Pathology WGs. Topic: Molecular Pathology at low cost: good practice and pitfalls

A preliminary programme will be submitted by the end of 2022, and we are working to recruit speakers from different geographic locations to share their experiences.

Also in preparation, we aim at offering a webinar in 2023, which will focus on the pre-analytical phases, illustrating challenges and pitfalls, and at which extent they can impact on the overall diagnostic process.

The aim for 2023 is to work even more closely with all WG members, and hopefully to attract new ones.

Giulia De Falco, Chair of the WG