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# **Intensive pathology training workshop for laboratory diagnosticians**

*Dr Les Gabor*



**Australian Government**

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**Fisheries Research and  
Development Corporation**

**Project No. 2008/317**

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## 7.0 NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY PRO-FORMA

2008/317 Intensive pathology training workshop for laboratory diagnosticians

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr L Gabor  
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### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. to facilitate the opportunity of intensive training of new pathologists from diagnostic veterinary laboratories
2. to facilitate updating of pathology skills in senior pathologists
3. expose both experienced and new pathologists to Dr J Handler prior to retirement
4. facilitate interaction of pathology staff at the State Veterinary laboratories of the Tasmanian and NSW governments

### **OUTCOMES ACHIEVED TO DATE (boxed)**

From the fish specific training perspective, the senior pathologists from the NSW system have had minimal aquaculture experience. Additionally, the four new pathologists developed an excellent fundamental background base from Dr Handler upon which to build further expertise.

The reciprocal training session undertaken by the principal author at the DPI Tasmania laboratory assisted the group of training pathologists prepare for further formal examinations.

## **NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY:**

During the week of 16-21/1/09, Dr Judith Handler visited the Veterinary Laboratory, DII, EMAI Menangle for five days of intensive histological and general aquatic diagnostic pathology training. Present were: Drs R Reece, S Hum, A Thompson, Z Spiers, E Lee, M Gabor, J Go, L Gabor from DII NSW and Drs M Dennis (U Syd), M Landos (Future Fisheries) and C Sangster (Taronga Zoo). Additional invitations were made to Private pathologists, and, other government agencies. Augmented by teaching modules already produced on behalf of AAPSP, Dr Handler spent significant time examining actual cases, production issues and health issues at the multiheaded microscope. A reciprocal visit by the author to the Tasmanian laboratory was undertaken in January, the aim of which was to expose some of the more senior pathologists to specialist level training.

**KEYWORDS: pathology, aquaculture, training.**

### **Acknowledgements:**

The author acknowledges the generous assistance of FRDC and of Ms Jo-Anne Ruscoe, for allowing this important training project to proceed. The author also wishes to sincerely thank Dr Handler for agreeing to the concept.

**Background and Need:**

In early 2008, the then Department of Primary Industries NSW (now Department of Innovation and Industry – DII) added five consolidated revenue pathologists positions to the roster of staff at the EMAI laboratory. The pathologists included two senior pathologists, Drs Rod Reece and Steve Hum, who have had very limited fish experience. From early 2008 on, the case load of aquatic cases has continued to increase, facilitated by the closure of the two remaining regional veterinary laboratories. This in depth exposure and training opportunity was required to raise the basic level of aquatic diagnostics in the NSW laboratory.

Additionally, Dr J Handler is an acknowledged world leader in aquatic diagnostics, and her retirement was imminent. The Department felt this was an opportune moment to expose a newer generation of diagnosticians to her expertise.

**Objectives:**

To expose new and senior pathologists to an intensive training session with the aim of increasing depth and breadth of diagnostic skills and fish/bivalve physiology.

**Methods:**

Dr Handler visited the EMAI laboratory during early 2009 for a five day workshop centering around her case material and the recently completed AAPSP training modules. As a reciprocal gesture, the author visited the Tasmanian DPI laboratory for a similar general pathology overview.

**Results, benefits:**

The workshop was an excellent opportunity for diagnosticians from two separate laboratories to interact and share both experience and knowledge. A reasonable first contact was made with the Tasmanian laboratory, one which has some unique strengths in the aquaculture world.

From the training perspective, the senior pathologists at DII NSW, a system in which bivalve and wild fin fish work is consistently increasing, have had very limited fish experience. This training program increased the in house capacity of DII significantly. Additionally, the four recently employed junior pathologists had very limited diagnostic experience, and Dr Handler has imprinted some of the fundamentals required.

Via invitations and attendance by external pathologists, increase networks were begun between diverse groups, all with interests in aquaculture.

**Conclusion and acknowledgments:**

This was likely one of the last opportunities for Dr Handler to sit down, and offer such an in depth yet relaxed training session. The author is extremely grateful for having been able to facilitate this exposure. Many years ago, as his first job as a pathologist, the author worked under Dr Handler's direction, and developed a modest expertise, but great respect, for the science of fish pathology. The author is most sincerely grateful that he has had the opportunity, thanks to FRDC, to offer the same experience to a new raft of pathologists.

The Menangle DII laboratory is attempting to increase its links with the NSW aquaculture fraternity, particularly with direct collaborations with the Government Fisheries group in Port Stephens. Whilst it would be flippant to suggest that one such course enables one with brilliant insights and expertise, it is accurate to state that such courses imbibe one with confidence and the tools to attempt sensible interpretations.

The author is most sincerely grateful to Ms J Ruscoe and to FRDC for having supported this modest, yet from our perspective, very important training session. The model was used to make similar appeals to other agencies, all of whom have suggested that the model is a most cost effective and reasonable approach to training and ensuring professional development.



**Day 3, Dr Handler with a selection of participants. EMAI, multiheaded scope room, Veterinary laboratory.**

**Participant comments:**

Dear Jo-anne,

Last week I had the pleasure of attending the Fish Pathology course conducted by Judith Handler and funded by FRDC. It was a great week and a unique opportunity to learn from one of the greats of fish pathology. We receive regular aquatic samples here and it is important for us to continually expand and refine our diagnostics skills.

Thank you again for helping to make this happen.

Regards,

Mel

Dr. Melinda Gabor  
BSc (Vet) BVSc PhD  
Veterinary Pathologist  
NSW DII



Hello Jo-Anne

I understand that you are the contact person regarding the FRDC sponsored fish pathology workshop that I ran last week at the EMAI Laboratory, Camden, for DPI NSW.

Thank you for this opportunity to work with such a group in this type of workshop that allowed us to cover a whole spectrum of material in a relaxed interactive setting. The group was large, for this type of workshop, but the facilities they provided meant that all 8-10 participants (with extensive background in pathology and /or fish) could cover the same material at the same time and maximise the interaction and efficiency of "information download".

thank you

Judith Handlinger

Dear Les,

Please accept my sincere gratitude to you and FRDC for inviting me to attend the Aquatic Pathology Course conducted by Judith Handlinger in February 2009. The course has proved invaluable in both aquatic cases I've completed since as well as in a comparative nature when dealing with amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Working in a relatively isolated environment like the zoo, I find it very valuable to network with my fellow Australian colleagues in such scholastic environments. I hope we can continue to share our pathology experiences and knowledge in the future.

Regards,  
Cheryl Sangster

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Les,

Re: Gross and histopathology training January 12th to 14th 2009

All four pathologists at the Animal Health Laboratory, Mt Pleasant (Tasmania) (Steve Pyecroft, Esmeraldo Cabana, Susan Lola and I) significantly benefited from the three day intensive histopathology and gross pathology training you presented last January.

Please pass on our (on behalf of DPIPWE, Tasmania) thanks to the FRDC for funding your visit and the pathology program. Because there is no veterinary school in Tasmania, we could not access similar pathology training (aimed at American College of Veterinary Pathologist board examination level) here in Tasmania.

All four pathologists agreed that the high level of training in

a) gross pathology (both endemic and exotic disease, including aquatic species), covering morphological diagnoses / aetiological diagnoses and

b) glass slides ( over 30 cases) reviewed around the multiheaded microscope, including detailed comments on written histopathological descriptions and morphological diagnoses

in a peer reviewed environment was excellent.

The long term benefit from your visit is your mentoring of my training for ACVP examinations. As we discussed I will be visiting EMAI over the next six months to consolidate this training, (including utilizing the AFIP Wednesday Slide Conference library at EMAI). In addition your support for Steve's ACVP board preparation has also been much appreciated.

Regards

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Authors comment: Every participant contacted me verbally and commented on how useful and enjoyable this session was.



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