# Addressing Informatics Training Gaps

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**Julie McDowell:**

Few residents receive training in informatics, but almost every laboratory faces informatics challenges. These include installing new software or a new instrument, maintaining privacy, protecting laboratory's data security, and more. This fall, the CAP is introducing a new informatics case-based education program, which is designed to help pathologists get ready to succeed in their careers by providing relevant, practical education on informatics topics they commonly encounter.

In this CAPcast interview, Dr. Mandy O'Leary, as a member of the Informatics Committee, explains the value that this program brings to pathologists. Dr. O'Leary worked to develop this new program with Dr. John Sinard, his key architect.

Dr. O'Leary, many pathologists may not be completely familiar with the definition of informatics and specifically how it applies to their jobs. How do you define informatics?

**Dr. Mandy O'Leary:**

Well, CAP defines clinical informatics as the application of information management and healthcare to promote safe, efficient, effective, personalized, and responsive care for patients. Then pathology informatics extends the clinical informatics concepts to include all of the data and tech elements as they specifically relate to lab in the practice of pathology. The lab's responsible for the integrity of the data that they derive from the patient specimens to produce the right result for the right patient at the right time, not only for patient care, but for applications at institutional and community levels as they relate to research and population-wide healthcare.

**Julie McDowell:**

Is informatics a common gap in pathologist training?

**Dr. Mandy O'Leary:**

Oh, absolutely. So since it was found that informatics training in path residency programs was often absent or inconsistent when it was available, CAP worked with the Association of Path Chairs, Pathology Chairs, and the Association for Pathology Informatics back in 2013, and they convened a work group with the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. And they developed PIER, P-I-E-R, or what's known as the Pathology Informatics Essentials for Residents. So that's a curriculum and a process with resources and toolkits to help faculty incorporate informatics into their training programs.

But while PIER's only been around for the last few years for trainees, everyone that's finished residency prior to 2013 we're likely very limited in the education they received about path informatics and its importance in the lab. So we're hoping that the ICBE case modules can fill in some of those blanks and provide guidance for practicing pathologists.

**Julie McDowell:**

Can you tell us a little bit about the structure of this new informatics case-based education program?

**Dr. Mandy O'Leary:**

So the ICBE program addresses the common gap in pathologist training by exploring the informatics connections between technology, staff, workflow processes, and data management. So through development of real life case scenarios, and yes, these issues have happened to us that are writing these, we've included decision-making with feedback and engaging interactions to help participants gain practical knowledge in addressing relevant informatics issues. So the exercises have been designed to engage and reinforce informatics practices such as software implementations and upgrades, lab test order issues, regulatory and compliance issues, and analysis of patient population data through lab testing. And then of course, for those who require it, CME credits are available for each case that's completed.

**Julie McDowell:**

Who do you recommend should enroll in this course?

**Dr. Mandy O'Leary:**

So these courses are appropriate for lab medical directors or staff pathologists. All the cases have been designed and peer reviewed by pathologists for pathologists.

**Julie McDowell:**

Well, thank you for discussing this topic, Dr. O'Leary. Any final thoughts you would like to share before we close?

**Dr. Mandy O'Leary:**

Sure. I'd just like to thank everyone on the CAP Informatics Committee, especially Dr. John Sinard and CAP'S education teams on working to develop this very useful resource. And we hope you can all take advantage of this great informatics learning opportunity.

**Julie McDowell:**

Well, great. For more information on CAP's new informatics case-based education program, please visit learning.cap.org.

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