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## NEW LOOK BIO-BABBLE FOR 2021

By Cassandra Griffin

Welcome to your new look 2021 Bio-Babble; fresh start for a fresh year. 2020 was a challenge to say the least but despite the restrictions, disruptions to sample flow and requirements for many of us to periodically work from home – biobankers persevered. In many cases, biobanks rose to the challenge and re-directed strategic goals to ensure they were best placed to partner with the scientific community; banking and distributing COVID-19 samples and joining international networks in a show of collaboration.

In 2021 the resilience of the biobanking world will once again be tested as we continue to face challenges posed by the COVID-19 world and an ever evolving funding landscape. Many of us now have renewed business plans, strategic goals and are prepared to move forward with a clear vision of our role within the research community. If the challenges faced through 2020 have demonstrated anything it's that continued support of scientific research is fundamental in modern society, not just in biomedical fields but environmental, chemical, historical and even extra-terrestrial.

Biobankers are flexible, innovative and essential partners of the research community contributing broadly across the scientific spectrum. In 2021 the Bio-Babble committee are looking forward to showcasing some of the incredible work carried out by biobankers in all scientific fields – bringing you some familiar stories and some you may not be aware of. On behalf of the Bio-Babble committee members Anusha Hettiaratchi, Georget Reaiche and I we wish you a safe, successful and prosperous 2021 and look forward to sharing your successes with the wider ABNA biobanking community.

ABNA 18TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**Biobanking – Blue Sky Horizons**

20 – 22 October 2021

Rendezvous Hotel Perth Scarborough  
Western Australia

**NEW 2021 DATES**

## VALE ANDREW BROOKS

It is with sadness that ABNA acknowledges the passing of Prof Andrew Brooks. Andrew is well known and respected within the Australasian biobanking community and his sudden death came as a shock when announced last month.

Prof Brooks was a regular visitor to Australia, we were privileged to have him present at ABNA's 2018 annual conference in Melbourne including a panel discussion. His last visit was in Feb 2020 just prior to the pandemic shutting down international travel. In the early days of the pandemic Prof Brooks was instrumental in the development of a corona virus saliva test, which was granted FDA approval in April 2020, increasing the speed of the testing process.

ABNA extends their thoughts to Andrew's family during this difficult time.

An article on Andrew Brooks can be found [HERE](#)



  
**ULTRA-LOW TEMPERATURE  
FREEZER RESOURCE**



ISBER has released its position statement listing key practices health agencies should consider to support the COVID-19 vaccine distribution with dedicated ULT freezers.

The document, titled "Ultra Low Temperature Freezers: Key Considerations," provides evidence based guidance for those responsible for distribution, storage, and management of the vaccine, to resources that detail the fundamentals of safe and efficient ULT freezer management, shipping and distribution. The document draws on accepted practices known to ensure robust ULT product storage and distribution that are routinely used by biorepositories. The document represents a consensus view from the biobanking community. The organization drew on the expertise of biorepository managers and industry vendors with further reference from the ISBER Best Practices, Fourth Edition. The statement intends to supplement guidance from national and local health agencies on managing the cold chain deployment of frozen COVID-19 vaccines.

**View the ISBER Position Statement [HERE](#)**



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
TESTING AUTHORITIES, AUSTRALIA**

## NATA ACCREDITATION TO ISO 20387

The National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) is pleased to announce the introduction of a biobanking accreditation program in accordance with ISO 20387 Biotechnology – Biobanking – General requirements for biobanking.

NATA was established in 1947, is the oldest national accreditation program and a founding member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). NATA is one of four bodies that form Australia's standards and conformance infrastructure, the others being Standards Australia, the National Measurement Institute (NMI) and the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ). NATA is a non-profit-distributing private company, limited by guarantee. NATA is independent of Government and is committed to acting impartially in the provision of its accreditation service.

The accreditation process with NATA will cover collection (or acquisition), processing and preservation, quality control, storage and distribution of biological material. It will also include a review of the management system underpinning these processes. The focus will be on competency, impartiality and consistency.

Accreditation with NATA will provide independent international recognition to biobanks that is highly regarded around the world. The benefits of compliance with the standard include greater cooperation and harmonisation between biobanks to make available reliable biological material and data for research and development.

NATA will be engaging with stakeholders, including technical experts, to further develop the program to ensure that it meets the needs of the scientific and clinical community.

Further details on the NATA biobanking accreditation program and requirements will be available soon.

Please direct any inquiries about accreditation for biobanks to [Gillian.treloar@nata.com.au](mailto:Gillian.treloar@nata.com.au)

### HAVE YOUR SAY:

ABNA is interested to hear what their member biobanks and biobankers think about the upcoming NATA accreditation to ISO 20387 and the accreditation process.

Please complete a short questionnaire before March 19 (it will take less than 2 minutes).

Click [HERE](#) to access the poll





# AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVE ON ISBER STANDARDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

We are pleased to share that ABNA Committee member Samantha Higgins (Quality Manager, Victorian Cancer Biobank) has been recently accepted to join the ISBER Standards Advisory Committee.

The Standards Advisory Committee serves as an advisory group that provides biobanking expertise on behalf of ISBER to establish consistent biobanking standards. This committee was responsible for conducting a survey amongst biobankers which showed that the large majority of respondents would be willing to follow ISBER standards and a standards-based accreditation program for specimen collection, processing, storing and distribution and this has helped shape ISBER policy regarding an accreditation program.

Samantha will meet monthly with the Committee comprising of International biobanking representatives to develop consistent biobanking standards, including ISBER Best Practices (5th edn). The Standards Advisory Committee also collaborates closely with the Education & Training Committee to develop related programs and tools such as the Qualification in Biorepository Science. She will be joining members from the US, Canada, Japan, Russia, South Africa, China, Israel and Europe. The Standards Advisory Committee is chaired by Daniel Simeon-Dubach of Med services, Switzerland, with Clare Allocca of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, US acting as co-chair.

As the Australia/New Zealand region representative at Standards, please join ABNA in congratulating Samantha on this appointment.

If you would like and further information about the Standards Advisory Committee, please contact Samantha at: [Samantha.higgins@cancervic.org](mailto:Samantha.higgins@cancervic.org)

## QUALIFICATION IN REPOSITORY SCIENCE

ISBER and ASCP BOC are pleased to announce the Qualification in Repository Science (QBRs) for biobankers.



Upon meeting specific educational and experience requirements, candidates will be eligible to complete an online examination and, if successful, gain recognition for their skills and competencies as biobankers with a qualification termed the QBRs. Biobanks are vital to medical research and precision medicine and require qualified professionals to deeply understand and exhibit proficiency in the biobanking sciences in order to obtain high quality samples. ISBER expects that the new qualification will help further the advancement of scientific discoveries through the field of biobanking.

Applications are now open. For details on application resources such as eligibility, topic outline, reading list, and more, please visit: <http://www.isber.org/qualification>.

## WEBINAR SERIES

### REGISTER NOW

<https://www.isber.org/store/viewproduct.aspx?id=17664285>

### PRICING

Registration includes access to the complete webinar series, including all live sessions, session recordings, and on-demand webinars.

ISBER Member: \$187 / series

Non-Member: \$231 / series

Organization Members may also purchase the webinar series for their groups as follows (please email [info@isber.org](mailto:info@isber.org) to take advantage of the bulk rate):

Small organization member: \$200

Medium organization member: \$400

Large organization member: \$800

### DESCRIPTION AND SCHEDULE

The ISBER Best Practices: Recommendations for Repositories Fourth Edition presents the most effective practices for the management of biological and environmental specimen collections and repositories. These are either evidence-based or consensus-based practices for collection, long-term storage, retrieval and distribution of specimens. They promote the availability of high-quality biological and environmental specimens for future research.

The Best Practices webinar series will include 1-hour live sessions, each presenting a different topic in the ISBER Best Practices, with time included for question and answer. Each live session will be recorded and available for on-demand viewing if you are unable to attend the live session. In addition to the live sessions, the series includes a number of pre-recorded sessions available for on-demand viewing as well.

The live session schedule is as follows:

- 1. March 24, 2021:** Planning Considerations
- 2. April 14, 2021:** Specimen Collection, Processing, Receiving and Retrieval
- 3. June 2, 2021:** Storage and Equipment
- 4. June, 2021:** Legal and Ethical Issues – Consent/IRB
- 5. July, 2021:** Legal and Ethical Issues – Non-Human
- 6. August 18, 2021:** Repository Information Management Systems
- 7. September, 2021:** Quality Management with Method Validation and Quality Control
- 8. October, 2021:** Quality Management
- 9. November 17, 2021:** Specimen Access, Utilization, and Disposition

The following topic presentations will be available for on-demand viewing in April, 2021:

1. Facilities
2. Safety
3. Training
4. Cost Management
5. Packaging and Shipping



## REGISTRATION FOR THE ISBER 2021 ANNUAL MEETING IS NOW OPEN!

The ISBER 2021 Annual Meeting (Hybrid) will feature a full virtual component to allow biobankers who are unable to travel to attend the meeting to participate from around the world.

Highlights of the virtual meeting component:

- Expert speakers from around the globe and multiple opportunities for live interaction with speakers
- Poster and oral abstract presentations
- Full exhibit hall with opportunities to video conference with exhibitors
- Multiple networking opportunities throughout the meeting to enable connection between biobankers across time zones
- All sessions recorded and available for on-demand viewing

We hope to see you online or in-person!

For more information and to register, please visit:

<https://www.isber.org/page/ISBER2021AnnualMeeting>

Pricing:

Early Bird – Virtual Only (Register by April 11, 2021)

\$295 USD ISBER members

\$370 USD Non-members

\$185 USD Student/Technician

Regular Rate – Virtual Only (Registration after April 11, 2021)

\$370 USD ISBER members

\$460 USD Non-members

\$230 USD Student/Technician

Group Discounts – Bulk discounts available for organisation members registering 5 or more staff

In-Person Pricing – Contact [info@isber.org](mailto:info@isber.org) for in-person registration fees

Low and Middle Income Countries – 25% – 50% discount