

IRC Annual Report 2006 – 2007

Chairing the International Relations Committee (IRC) has to be one of the most interesting posts within the Association, as one hears about initiatives by so many dedicated and sometimes brave individuals, doing what they can to make a difference to the often woeful state of anaesthesia in the developing world. It has been my privilege to hold this post for two years now, and I am filled with admiration for the many individuals around the world who are involved in this work.

The IRC exists to try and assist with funding where it can, and in this way hopes to make some small difference. As well as the financial assistance, the knowledge that fellow anaesthetists are taking an interest in the daily struggle to provide an acceptable standard of care is an immense morale boost for those on the ground.

Last year IRC committed funds to a refresher course for anaesthetists (medical and non medical) in Uganda. Almost every anaesthetist in the country was able to attend one of the two back-to-back courses free of charge, and in conjunction with the Overseas Anaesthesia Fund and some of our industry colleagues, all attendees were able to receive donated textbooks and equipment. This was a hugely successful initiative, and IRC has earmarked funds which will hopefully allow this course to be repeated for the next few years.

We have continued to award travel grants to members who have organised a trip themselves – countries reached in this way this year include Liberia, Georgia and Armenia, Uganda, Brazil, and many others. Two members are co-ordinating an ambitious survey to try and quantify resources in a number of African countries, and although so far they have not required IRC funding, we have committed to fund this as and when it becomes necessary. Another grant was given to our colleagues from the Primary Trauma Care foundation, who do such good work in many countries, and a second tranche of money was given to the charity “Mothers of Africa”, formerly “Mothers of Benin”, who are endeavouring to improve standards of anaesthetic care during pregnancy and childbirth in a number of West African countries.

On a more prosaic level, the committee has been working this year on formalising many of the arrangements that exist for applying for and awarding IRC grants. Formerly the IRC budget was small and grants were awarded informally, often verbally. With larger sums being considered, not to mention the very stringent requirements of the charity commission, it was important that procedures were formalised, open, and unambiguous. We have been working hard towards this, and this process will continue – it means more tiresome paperwork for everyone, but such is the way of the world now!

I would like to thank the members of the committee who give such sterling support, the AAGBI administrative staff who work so hard on this committee’s behalf, and the many members who undertake and support this important work.

Hilary Aitken

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