



Anaesthesia News

No. 196 November 2003

The Newsletter of the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland.

ISSN 0959-2962

36TH ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING OF THE GROUP OF ANAESTHETISTS IN TRAINING

Bristol 17-19 September 2003

By Dr. John Dick

The sun always shines on GAT meetings, or so it would appear, as we were warmed by an Indian summer sky on the first day. Bristol city was looking better than ever as the vast, neo-gothic Wills Memorial Building provided a suitably peaceful spot for the scientific meeting in Clifton's cool university precinct. The meeting got off to a great start with Professor Gianni D'Angelini (by far the most interesting cardiac surgeon I've ever met) leading the 'Medicine and the Media' session. A truly legendary man, who ran middle distance for the Italian Olympic team and invented a battery chicken-catching device before becoming a world famous cardiac surgeon, he told us how to manage media attention and gave us a lesson in Italian history to boot! Dr. Chris Monk then gave a very honest account of 'The Bristol cardiac story' from his perspective as clinical director of the anaesthetic department at the time; and placed it in context with subsequent reforms. This was a sobering talk and he gave valuable advice on how important it is to keep good records. The session was rounded off by Joanna Crosse, who has vast experience within the media and now trains professionals to cope with the press.



Sarah hands over to Jim

I immediately liked Professor Andrew Wolf, who kicked off the 'Paediatric Anaesthesia' session, because he showed us a picture of his motorbike. The rest of his talk was equally interesting to me, as he informed us about total spinals for paediatric cardiac surgery (triple yikes!) He sensibly suggested we didn't try this at home... and then Dr. Anthony Moriarty from Birmingham concisely outlined the difficulty non-paediatric specialists now face since centralisation of paediatric services has occurred. We can't afford to ignore this space. Dr. Ian Jenkins then went on to outline the real crux of the problem - transferring a critically ill child

Contents

- 1-2 36th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Group of Anaesthetists in Training
- 3 President's Report
- 5 Editorial
- 6 Letters to the Editor
- 7 SAS Page
- 8 History Page
- 11 Inheritance Tax: Part 3
- 16 Pensions – a bit more
- 18 Dr de Quincy
- 20 Smile And Retain Smile - Part Two
- 22 Research in Anaesthesia
- 24 Letter from Ghana

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to a definitive centre - and how best to train non-paediatric specialists for this role.

The last session of the day was great fun. Dr John Leigh gave a witty lecture on appraisals and portfolios. Dr Alex Goodwin followed with advice on how to win at interviews, which was comically delivered and full of good hints. Finally, Dr Pat Oakley gave us a fascinating insight on how the changes within the NHS might effect us once we become consultants and progress to become 'eminences grises'!

That night, we enjoyed a great party within the grounds of the magnificent Ashton Court. A buffet dinner and musical entertainment were laid on, and there were even dodgem cars and a fairground ride called the Energiser (never again!) As if that wasn't enough, there was the opportunity to blow-off some steam by donning a sumo wrestling suit. There were reports of a stray sumo on the dance floor and two in the dodgems - but I didn't see any.

Day two of lectures was attended by a slightly contracted audience for some reason but was, nonetheless, stimulating. The pros and cons of clinical governance were debated by Dr. Alexander Mayor and Dr. Neville Goodman (playing devil's advocate). Dr. Sheila Willatts followed with a sound talk on how to stay out of trouble.

The registrar's prize was hotly contested with six presentations, and won by Dr. Robert Self with his study on

platelet sensitivity to low dose aspirin. Well done Robert. Thanks to all who took part in this prize and in the audit and poster presentations.

During the AGM, Dr. Jim Down was elected as GAT committee chairman, and Drs. Fitzwilliams, Hopkins and Ryan were duly elected as new committee members. There followed the trainee conference, with talks on how to do research, get an MBA, get a postgraduate teaching qualification and on representing trainees. All good stuff for the C.V! Nevil Hutchinson presented data from the most recent GAT training survey, and Peter Maguire gave us an update on the ever approaching European Working Time Directive.

The Pinkerton lecture is always hotly awaited and this year was no exception. Mr David Boxall of Cameron Balloons gave us all a fascinating insight into the world of hot air balloons and applied high altitude physiology. We were treated to the highs and lows (!) of the Breitling round-the-world balloon expedition.

The Annual Dinner started off with a champagne stroll through a simulated rainforest. The 5-course feast that followed was extremely well attended and followed immediately by a band that rocked! When you needed a breather, you just wandered outside to a terrace overlooking Bristol's famous harbour side - very Hollywood.

The last day was, fortunately, only a morning, but contained a variety of hot topics, including managing bleeding in Jehovah's witnesses (Dr. Dafydd Thomas), as well as obstetric (Dr. Mark Scrutton), airway (Dr. Tim Cook) and



David Boxall

neuroanaesthesia (Dr. Samantha Shinde) sections.

Finally, Dr. Peter Simpson, President of the Royal College of Anaesthetists gave the inaugural Wylie lecture on the changing face of anaesthetic training; a talk right from the top that gave a clear view of how the College plans to manage inevitable manpower issues.

During the meeting the two workshops - Simulator, and Paediatric Blocks (supported by B Braun) - ran extremely well and we thank all concerned for their efforts.

I think this was a superb meeting, and I congratulate the local organising committee, and in particular, Dr. Claire Gleeson. We should also thank Abbott Laboratories for their generous support of this conference. Finally, I think we should recognise the great commitment of our retiring chairman, Dr. Sarah Harries, who has worked tirelessly for GAT- thanks Sarah!

2



The Energiser



In the dodgems