

GAT Page

The Chair is dead, Long live the Chair!

Chris Meadows
Immediate Past-Chair, GAT



Felicity Howard
GAT Committee Chair



Come in number 24, your time is up. As my time on the GAT Committee draws to a close, it is tempting to look back on the last five years and recount stories of the turbulent times in anaesthesia training. However, retrospection is rarely constructive, change is an integral part of evolution, and we must look to the future.

With the turning of the clock at the Annual General Meeting, this year held in Cambridge at the GAT ASM (1-3rd July), I shall hand over the reins to Felicity Howard. Having served on the Committee since 2006 and performed the duties of Honorary Secretary admirably for the last two years, Felicity is most definitely a safe pair of hands.

The ASM itself promises to be a spectacular event, the academic department at Cambridge having produced a superb programme with 'big name' speakers, together with punting on the Cam and dinner in the banqueting hall at King's College. Huge thanks are due to Professor David Menon and the Local Organising Committee.

July also brings two updated GAT publications: the staple GAT Handbook, now in its 9th edition, and the fully revised 'Organising a Year Abroad' guide, a bible for those wishing to navigate the minefield of Out-Of-Programme posts. Later in the year there will be a reprint, by demand, of

the 'Your Career in Anaesthesia' booklet, aimed at undergraduates and Foundation doctors; and a new publication, the 'Core Survival Guide', offering practical advice from the GAT Committee to those just starting out in our specialty.

The GAT Seminar programme continues to run successfully, with the 'Consultant Interview', 'Management', 'Medico-Legal' and 'Ventilation' seminars all once again scheduled this year.

Of course, GAT would not be GAT without the politics. Current debate includes the often thorny issue of who should perform rapid sequence inductions in the Emergency Department; the implications and full impact of the 48-hour European Working Time Regulations on duration of training and inevitable scrutiny of the RITA / ARCP processes; the rights and wrongs of study leave time as a Less-Than-Full-Time trainee; and the countdown toward national recruitment into the specialty using a more correct approach.

We continue to use the email database to survey trainees and thus inform debate. The next few months will see communications about methods of preparation for the Primary FRCA exam following reports of falling pass-rates and, a particularly sensitive issue at present, a Welfare Committee / GAT collaboration questionnaire examining morale and

wellbeing amongst trainees. All survey results are to be reported in *Anaesthesia News*, together with insightful comment and analysis.

As I write this, almost my last act as Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for all their hard work during my time in office and also to thank AAGBI Council and the in-house staff for their advice, support and friendship. Thank you too to the many anaesthetic trainees who have written, emailed and telephoned me with suggestions, worries and complaints. With their help, the GAT Committee will continue to be representative and enjoy the high regard in which it is held. I wish my successor well.

Chris Meadows
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So, how to follow that... first and foremost I must say thank you to Chris for all his hard work on behalf of GAT, particularly during his time as Chair over the last two years. He has worked tirelessly to raise the profile of GAT and fought for the trainee voice to be heard throughout his time in office, often under trying personal circumstances. Chris has a remarkable ability to distil the discussions and opinions of trainees and the GAT Committee into a short coherent summary and direct this towards the very people who should hear it and, more importantly, who have the power to act on it. For this he will be particularly missed, and I can only hope to emulate him.

For those of you whom I have not come across before on my travels, my name is Felicity Howard and I am a final year Specialist Registrar from the Welsh Deanery, which has a long tradition of

providing GAT Chairs to the AAGBI. My specialty is Paediatric Anaesthesia, for which I undertook a year out-of-programme at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London. During this time I lived apart from my husband so I have a particular understanding of that situation in which many of you find yourselves, especially post-MMC. I feel very privileged to have been elected as the next GAT Chair, and will do my utmost to serve you all with dedication to the cause. I will have a particular challenge on my hands as, by the time you read this article, six new committee members (half of the total elected members) will have been elected to replace those standing down. Many thanks must be extended to Drs Paul Johnston, Mark Hearn, Manu Shankar Hari, Adam Paul and Mike Parris who have all worked extremely hard on your behalf during their time on the GAT Committee. They will be sadly missed, but I look forward to welcoming the six new members in their place. My job during my year as Chair will be to cement this new Committee together to continue the good work.

I also have some ideas for moving forward with the work of GAT during my time as Chair. In particular, I would like to try to extend the co-operation between GAT and the trainee representatives of specialist societies; if you are one of these people then please contact me via email at gat@aagbi.org so that we can explore the available options. Similarly, I would love to hear from you if you are a representative of a local anaesthetic trainee committee; I know a lot of hospitals/regions have these and that the people involved do a lot of very good work at a local level. It would be fantastic to know what is going on "out there" and if there are any ways

that GAT can be of assistance. The AAGBI currently operates a very successful Linkman scheme; at present we do not have anything similar for trainees so we on the Committee have no formal way of knowing what else is going on around the country. GAT exists to represent the interests of our members and, as mentioned before, we cannot properly represent you if we do not know what you want or need from us. So please get in touch and let us know, either on the above e-mail address or through our web pages on the main AAGBI website. The website is shortly to be revamped, and the GAT pages will be similarly revised. For now, these are the best and most up-to-date way of finding out what the Committee has been up to on your behalf in recent times. They include reports of meetings attended by Committee members, and this year the GAT ASM has been chosen to pilot the new electronic booking system for AAGBI events.

The AAGBI is currently involved with international trainees in Uganda through the work of the International Relations Committee. At present this takes place without any GAT involvement, but I would be keen to explore ways in which we could interact with this scheme.

These are just some of my ideas for the future; I recognise that I cannot change the world during a year as Chair, but I hope to go some way towards continuing the work of my excellent predecessor and promoting trainees' interests at every opportunity. Please let me know what else you think we, as a Committee, should be focusing on, so that we can do our best for you – the future of our specialty.

Felicity Howard
GAT Committee Chair