

APRIL 2008 NEWSLETTER



President's Report

This newsletter is meant to keep all members of our Association informed about events that are related to our craft group. Sometimes this news is sad. All of us were shocked to hear of the tragic death of Anne-Marie King after a fall from a ladder. She was just emerging from the valley that Phillip's death had created, and we all hoped that she would regain the happiness and vivacity that we knew in the past. We are all greatly saddened by this, and extend to her children our deepest sympathy.

From the other end of Australasia, the news from the Land of the Long White Cloud is more cheerful. Spencer Beasley, recently elected to College Council, has been appointed New Zealand Censor and at the last Council meeting, Chair of the Board of Surgical Education and Training. Both of these are important, responsible positions, particularly Chair of the Board of SET, and we wish him well in meeting the challenges that will no doubt arise in the course of his duties.

Phil Morreau has resigned from his position of Secretary and Treasurer of the Association after 4 years in the position. Phil's contribution has been huge. He has managed the financial affairs of the Association extremely well so that we are now in a solid position and able to look at some initiatives that need funds. He has worked hard on updating the constitution, a dry and largely thankless task, but essential if we are to avoid organisational disasters in the future. As well, his contribution to executive meetings, with his commonsense, analytical skills, and sense of humour, has been huge. Happily, we are not losing his contribution altogether as he can now be the New Zealand representative on the Board of Paediatric Surgery and give us the benefit of his educational skills as well as those that he displayed so admirably in his previous position.

A call for nominations to fill the vacant position has produced one response, and that is from Robert Stunden. We welcome him to the position and look forward to his contribution.

Much work has gone into the new service agreement with the College. This document spells out the relationship between our Association and the College, including the financial aspects. As a numerically small association, we find it beneficial to have close links to the College.

The other big event is the implementation of the Surgical Education & Training scheme. It is too early to make much comment, but I am sure that most of us feel a little uncertain as to how the dramatic increase in the number of In Training Assessments will be managed. How to find the time to do them, how to attain an even standard, and how to accurately reflect our assessment of a trainee's ability are all challenges that we must meet, and overcome. Virtually every one of us will be involved at some stage. It might be worthwhile airing any problems or solutions to problems by circulating them electronically. If you have comments that you wish to make, questions to ask, or matters to be aired, send them to Rebecca, or me, and they can be circulated to the whole membership for comment.

Andrew Barker and Ralph Cohen have recently joined the examiners. With Guy Henry's addition quite recently, this enlarges the pool of examiners in order to cope with the increased number of trainees that will be presenting for Final Fellowship in the next few years. While being an examiner involves time, hard work, some agonising decisions at times, it is also one of the most educational and rewarding tasks related to the functioning of the College. We wish all the examiners well. May their judgement be astute.

Finally, I wish to thank Rebecca Letson for her continuing help. We congratulate her on her marriage, and enjoyed meeting her husband Nathan. We are grateful for the commitment that she has shown to our affairs, and her organisational skills. We hope that we can enjoy having her help for some time to come.

Hugh Martin, AM FRACS

Council Meeting February 2008

In case you have not yet heard before this newsletter reaches you, your new President is Ian Gough (Queensland, general surgeon), and the Vice-president is Ian Dickinson (Queensland, orthopaedic surgeon). Ian Civil remains Censor-In-Chief, and Keith Mutimer Treasurer. Spencer Beasley was elected chairman of the Education Board, a significant compliment to his skill and experience, having been on Council for only 12 months.

The President's report at this Council meeting included the minutes of the recent meeting of the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC). In case you are not familiar with this committee, it is what its title says: its members are the presidents of all medical colleges that are recognised by the AMC. It is chaired by one of the previous presidents. At present Russell Stitz is the president. It serves as a conduit for communication as well as a forum for discussion. It is the only body that represents all the learned Colleges, and as such it is a major point of contact between specialists and policy makers, senior health bureaucrats often asking to attend as observers. For example, the government's recent decision to reconsider its plan for national registration was largely driven by opposition from CPMC and the AMA. However, decisions taken by CPMC are not binding on any of the constituent colleges, so that no college can find itself dictated to by a decision that CPMC takes.

Financial support for the role of supervisors of surgery remains on the College's agenda and is being pushed forward. It is well recognised that there will be a lot more work for supervisors with the introduction of the SET program. It is impossible to accurately assess the amount of work that will be required, but the College is actively seeking dialogue with the jurisdictions about funding this extra work. We recognise that the jurisdictions will not simply hand out money without having some sort of expectation as to what will be delivered as a result of this extra expense. To be able to tell what outcome can be expected, the precise role of the Supervisors of Surgical training will have to be clearly defined by the

Education Board.

Related to the function of Surgical Supervisors is the development of the electronic log book. The two issues that are currently being addressed are those of privacy, and how the entries are to be checked. Apparently, progress is being made on these matters.

The financial position of the College is sound. The debt incurred to build the east wing of the Melbourne building looks like being completely cleared next year. That this is the case despite the recent downturn in the stock market is due to three factors: the present system of accounting that allows a much clearer idea of the exact cost of each College activity with a rigid adherence to the planned budget; the insistence that each activity that is undertaken on behalf of a group that pays (e.g. examinations, AUSAID) is self funded; and the fact that the College's functioning is no longer dependent on the income from its unallocated share portfolio. While the majority of the College's share portfolio is tied to specific bequests so the earnings are used in named scholarships, there are a few million dollars in shares whose earnings are unallocated. Some years ago, these earnings were used for general College business, but a few years ago it was realised that this left the College's financial stability at the mercy of fluctuations in the share market, so the finances were restructured to make the day to day business independent of this income. It is now used for specific, budgeted projects.

There have been two significant developments in the matter of College properties. There has been a re-appraisal of the state of the (old) west wing, the building that runs parallel to Spring Street. You may recall that a previous report had given it a maximum life of five years, and there was a proposal to rebuild it under a "build, own, occupy and transfer (BOOT)" scheme, in which a commercial developer purchased a 50 year lease, built on the site and occupied it for 50 years after which the College took back the building, having invested the money raised by leasing the area, hopefully at a profit. Because this scheme was extremely sensitive to fluctuations in the value of the stock market, Council was very apprehensive about it, but no good alternative was evident. Happily, the new assessment of the west wing

is that, with some work on it that will cost in the region of \$100k per annum for the next 5 years, we can expect something like 15 years of use.

The other property decision was to proceed with an application to develop the site of the Brisbane State Office. While there a great distance between this decision and the commitment of funds to build, a significant outlay of some millions may be needed eventually.

One of the factors that complicates any property decisions is that the ground on which the College's headquarters lies is close to the Exhibition Building and surrounding park land, so it is considered to be "in the shadow" of this world heritage site. This makes any planning, or estimation of value, much more difficult. The other big unknown is the shape of surgical practice in the future, and the direction of change of the College in the next ten to fifteen years. So at the moment any plans for major redevelopment of the west wing are on hold.

At the time of writing this I am looking forward to the College's strategic planning weekend at the end of March. I shall keep you informed of developments in the next newsletter.

Hugh Martin, AM FRACS

**CONGRATULATIONS TO
PROFESSOR SPENCER
BEASLEY WHO WAS RECENTLY
APPOINTED CHAIR, BOARD OF
SURGICAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING (BSET), ROYAL
AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF
SURGEONS.
SPENCER IS ALSO THE
CURRENT NEW ZEALAND
CENSOR IN ADDITION TO
MANY OTHER POSITIONS AND
CONTRIBUTIONS TO SURGICAL
AND EDUCATIONAL
ORGANISATIONS AND
COMMITTEES.**

Professional Development and Standards Board Meeting February 2008

A number of issues highly relevant to Paediatric Surgeons were dealt with in this meeting of the Professional Development and Standards Board. Infection control was one of the most important. This is a matter that is of immediate concern to all of us that have contact with patients. It is also a matter in which we, as surgeons and leaders of our teams, must take a leadership role. Clean hands (washing, or cleaning with alcohol based products) are the single biggest factor in preventing cross infection, and are under our direct control. If your hospital has not yet installed alcohol wash dispensers on every door post in its wards, you should be demanding that it be done. Other than that, no administrative action, no special funding, and the co-operation of no other group is needed for us to show our peers, our trainees, our house staff, our students, and our nursing colleagues an example by being meticulous in cleaning our hands after every patient contact, including handling charts. Rounds should start with a reminder to remove watches and jewellery from hands and forearms, and to tuck in any articles hanging around the neck, such as ID cards. Auditing adherence to these measures should be encouraged.

Emergency surgery was another topic of relevance to us. The College has produced an excellent document on the subject. It outlines many of the problems that we face such as increasing specialisation (and the potential for surgeons to be de-skilled or unwilling to participate), lack of structures to comply with safe hours, and the tendency for hospital administrators to relegate emergency surgery to a place beneath routine operating. (One major children's hospital actually abolished its daytime emergency theatre several years ago). The document suggests some mechanisms to help solve these problems such as ensuring that every job advertisement includes participation in the emergency roster as part of the post. Training in each of the nine examinable specialties equips the Fellow to treat emergencies within that discipline.

BOARD OF PAEDIATRIC SURGERY

The two big upcoming events in the local Paediatric Surgery educational calendar are the RACS Annual Scientific Congress which is to be held in Hong Kong, and Selection. In Hong Kong we will be having numerous Board business meetings including our opportunity to be quizzed by the surgical supervisors. Of course trainees will be eagerly presenting to compete for best paper, and attending all the sessions of this exciting international program.

Selection is in Adelaide this year. For those who have not been associating closely with trainees, selection is combined with Registrar Annual Training Seminar (RATS). This is a compulsory meeting for all Australian and New Zealand paediatric surgery trainees where they give papers, attend educational workshops and interact in person with each other. They do communicate throughout the year via DOGS (directed online group studies), but our level of internet interaction does not yet beat face to face debate. Lastly the Board interviews each trainee to discuss their previous year's reports, logbook, concerns and future directions or questions. The trainee evaluation reports for each trainee are examined and discussed carefully by the Board before the trainee is given this opportunity for feedback on their progress. We cannot emphasise enough the importance of trainers (that is all of you who have registrars working with you) providing detailed evaluations to the Board and to the trainees.

This philosophy of feedback underpins the philosophy of Surgical Education and Training (SET). Formal and informal discussions throughout the terms on the trainee's progress in the nine surgical competencies must be given and recorded, so they know what they are doing right and where they need to improve. For exceptional trainees, records of attainment of competencies can mean shortening their total training time. Similarly for those who are struggling, it is an opportunity to bring themselves up to the standard expected of their year of training, by allowing the trainer to detect an area of weakness then focus teaching and assistance on those areas. These are the chief aims of continuous evaluation and feedback; to facilitate focused teaching, improvement and enable more efficient training. However the other role of thorough midterm and end of term evaluation reports is prove that formal transparent records have been kept of a failure to improve despite efforts to do so.

We seem to be using jargon by referring to the nine competencies in SET but consider that most trainees who fail, as well as most surgeons who encounter professional condemnation, do so in areas of non-technical aspects of surgery, for example teamwork, professionalism, ethics, medical expertise (record keeping, history taking, the formulation and timely instigation of appropriate management plans etc). The evaluation form tries to guide assessment in these areas, although assessment tools are always under review and we hope to make some more progress in this area.

But that is not all that will be done in Adelaide. We will be interviewing for 2 days to select new trainees into our SET program. Our first challenge will be changing our mindset and adjusting our selection tools to take into account the very junior nature of applicants. SET has been introduced so that one can apply to specialist surgical training in the second post graduate year (PGY2). This means people in the first year of a SET program have never held a PHO, SHO or registrar position. This will create a challenge for all. With Safe Hours the introduction of many more registrars per hospital may mean the teaming of junior SET One registrars with more senior registrars, may help the trainees achieve basic surgical competencies.

Finally I risk sounding repetitive in reminding that our SET program is based on a six year progression with the first two years spent doing Surgery in General (General Surgery, Urology etc). That means despite appointing maximum numbers of suitable candidates into our program each year, if the trainee has not done achieved Surgery in General competencies prior to entry, it will be two years before these trainees commence Advanced Paediatric Surgery posts (SET Year 3 to SET Year 6). We also have many deferments and interruptions which creates vacancies in accredited paediatric posts. Nonetheless it is one of the Boards chief aims to fill all accredited Advanced Paediatric posts with ANZ trainees.

As I am sure Rebecca will be wondering how to fit this long report into the newsletter, I shall leave further discussion of SET One and Two Posts till the next time.

**Associate Professor Deborah Bailey, F.R.A.C.S.(Paed.) M.B.B.S.
Chair Board of Paediatric Surgery
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons**

BOARD OF PAEDIATRIC SURGERY

Registrar Annual Training Seminar (RATS)



The Registrar Annual Training Seminar (RATS) will be held in the Barossa Valley and Adelaide (South Australia) from Tuesday 17 June 2008 to Saturday 21 June 2008. The compulsory seminar is attended by all active Surgical Trainees in the SET Program in Paediatric Surgery.

Trainee Organiser, Dr Warwick Teague (Women's and Children's Hospital Adelaide) has developed a comprehensive scientific program. Highlights of the program include the following sessions:

- Congenital Cystic Lung Disease Session, **sponsored by Johnson & Johnson Medical**
- Difficult Urology Scenarios
- Antenatal Hydronephrosis
- Uroradiology
- Urodynamics
- Minimally Invasive VUR Surgery, **sponsored by Q-Med (Deflux)**

The trainees also meet as a group with the Board of Paediatric Surgery and individually with two members of the Board to discuss their training program progression.

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SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS

Hong Kong and Guangzhou - May 2008

Special thanks to Tom Clarnette and Liz McLeod for putting together the Paediatric Surgery Scientific Program for the 2008 Annual Scientific Congress in Hong Kong and Spencer Beasley for coordinating the Scientific Program of the Satellite Meeting at Guangzhou Children's Hospital.

PAPS 2008 - Jackson Lake Lodge, Wyoming USA

June 29 – July 3, 2008

Located alongside Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, PAPS 2008 will be the most picturesque and adventurous ever!

PAPS recommend you book your accommodations as soon as possible. Due to the July 4th Independence Day holiday, it is expected almost all accommodations will be fully booked. Jackson Lake Lodge is a beautiful isolated nature setting. AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT – reserve your hotel room as early as possible.

In addition to a cutting-edge scientific program, PAPS this year features great events to network and socialize with your colleagues including:

- Yellowstone National Park Tour
- Gala Banquet at the spectacular Diamond Cross Ranch
- Adventure opportunities for you and your family including: horseback riding, hiking, raft trips, scenic cruises, canoeing, kayaking, fishing and many more!
- Fun for the whole family, bring your kids.

Please visit www.paps2008.com for more details.

Pan African Paediatric Surgical Association Congress

17-23 August 2008

Hosted by the Ghana Association of Paediatric Surgeons (GAPS) in Accra, Ghana, the theme of the congress is "Challenges of Neonatal Surgery in Africa". Plenary sessions for the Congress will include: anaesthesia in the surgical neonate, nutrition in the surgical neonate, intestinal atresias, surgery of kidney and ureters, cleft lip and palate, spina bifida and club foot. There will be workshops on transanal pull-through for Hirschsprung's disease and cleft lip and palate during the congress. Abstracts (no more than 500 words) must be submitted no later than 31 March 2008. For abstract and registration inquiries, please contact Dr Glover-Addy hopelove12001@yahoo.com or Dr William at wappmenspapsa2008@gmail.com.

Between the 10th and 19th of February 2009 there will be a medical conference in Antarctica. This will be followed by meetings in Patagonia. Topics covered will be dermatology, internal medicine, surgery, venereology, and tropical medicine. A practice managers' meeting has been organized for the same time. More information is available at www.cme.au.com.

Between the 1st and 4th of November 2008 there will be a medical conference in Vietnam, followed by a meeting in Angkor Wat. A practice managers' meeting will be held at the same time. More information is available at www.cme.au.com

Please inform your colleagues about this golden opportunity to see Antarctica before it melts.

CONGRATULATIONS - AWARDS

RACS Surgical Research Award 2007 – Professor John Hutson

Professor Hutson is an AAPS member and pre-eminent surgical scientist with major contributions to surgical research and is the Professor of Paediatric Surgery at Melbourne University.

John Hutson achieved Fellowship of the College in 1980 and rather than entering private practice chose to pursue an academic surgical career in the USA and later in Glasgow, Scotland.

On his return to Australia, John was appointed to the Royal Children's Hospital where he remains today as Director of General Surgery. His principal academic interest is the undescended testis, rare intersex anomalies, congenital urinary tract abnormalities and recently, children with challenging colonic dysfunction secondary to intestinal neuronal dysplasia. He was awarded a Doctor of Medicine from Monash and Melbourne Universities for his research contributions.

Professor Hutson's hallmark is his capacity to teach and mentor aspiring surgeons from around the world. During this time, he has supervised nearly 40 students for higher degrees, co-authored 11 books and published more than 300 articles. He is a member of many research societies and founder and convenor of the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons Experimental Research Club and the Paediatric Urology Club of Australasia.

The College recognised his excellence with

the award of the John Mitchell Crouch Fellowship in 1989. In 2007, he was awarded the Order of Australia for services to medicine, particularly for the field of paediatric surgery as a clinician, teacher and researcher and for his contribution as a scout.

During the last twenty years, he has been a leader in the Australian Scouting Association and has contributed to the health and well-being of thousands of children.



Sir Louis Barnett Medal 2007 – Professor Patricia Davidson

Professor Trish Davidson graduated from Glasgow University. She holds an FRCS in General Surgery, an FRACS in Paediatric Surgery and an FRCP in Paediatrics and an MD by thesis from the University of Melbourne. Professor Davidson has been

the Director of Paediatric Surgery at John Hunter Children's Hospital and then as Professor of Paediatric Surgery at the University of Newcastle. Currently Trish is the Director of Child Health Services for the Hunter and New England regions.

Trish Davidson's commitment and contributions to the College have been outstanding. Following her election to Council in 1998, she was immediately appointed to numerous committees. Her encouragement of trainees, led to the establishment of the College Trainees Association.

Trish was Censor-in-Chief, Chair of the Education Policy Board, Chair of the Board of Advanced Surgical Training and a member

CONGRATULATIONS - AWARDS

of Council Executive for three years from 2003-2006. During her tenure, the Board of Advanced Surgical Training was restructured as the Board of Specialist Surgical Training with broader governance responsibility including assessment of overseas trained surgeons. As Censor-in-Chief, Trish was influential in the major reviews of processes of the College accreditation of training posts and the assessment of overseas trained surgeons that followed the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission authorisation determination.

Trish Davidson has had a very significant influence on surgical education. She has promoted quality, fairness and transparency in all aspects of selection, education, training and assessment.

Professor Trish Davidson has made outstanding contributions to education, training and advancement of surgery and is a worthy recipient of the Sir Louis Barnett Medal.

Dr Craig McBride - Dr William Snowball Award 2007

This award recognises outstanding leadership and initiative by a member of the Junior Medical Staff at Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne. William Snowball (1855 - 1902) is considered the founder of paediatrics at the Children's Hospital. It is said that 'his life's work was the success of the hospital'.

As the recipient, Craig has displayed outstanding leadership which is beyond his expected duties and has significantly contributed to enhancing the life at RCH. The areas of leadership and contribution include: Teaching of junior medical staff, nursing staff, medical students, or allied health staff; Patient care initiatives; Peer support Administration; Team work.

Dr William Snowball (1855-1902) was regarded as the founder of paediatrics at the Children's Hospital, Melbourne. His life's work was the success of the hospital - "he was its leading spirit, guiding and directing

its growth, the wise adviser in all building operations, and in fostering clinical teaching". On his death a plaque erected by honorary staff to his memory read Si monumentum requires circumspice - "If you seek his monument look around you".*

This award acknowledges Craig McBride's enthusiastic encouragement of the hospital's junior medical staff to achieve excellence in their work, to pursue research opportunities and take active roles in the operating theatre. Many continue to benefit from his passion and flair for teaching and from the way he treats all patients and their families with respect and dignity.

Craig started a 2 year advanced surgical training appointment in April 2006, holding the position of Chief Surgical Registrar. Craig was admitted to Fellowship in Paediatric Surgery of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons on 13 December 2007.

He is warmly regarded by his supervisors and colleagues alike for his ability to manage his role with patience and positivity. Craig is an inspiration to other surgical registrars and very deserving of this award.

Dr Warwick Teague - Ethicon Prize

Dr Warwick Teague won the Ethicon Prize for the best paper presented overall at the Tasmania Annual Scientific Meeting in Launceston from 6-7 October 2007 for his presentation "*Mechanisms of islet mesenchyme-to-epithelial transition: implications for cell transplantation in diabetes.*"

Dr Tamara Bonney - Foundation for Surgery Research Scholarship

Dr Bonney was awarded the Foundation for Surgery Research Scholarship for her topic: "*A reappraisal of the role of androgen in testicular descent and the pathogenesis of cryptorchidism.*" Dr Bonney's supervisor is Professor John Hutson.

Congratulations to all award winners.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Applications are invited for scientists and surgical trainees with an interest in Paediatric Surgery, Education, Trauma or Burns to conduct research within the department of Academic Surgery at The Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW) and The University of Sydney. Specific research interests of A/Professor Holland include - neonatal gastro-intestinal surgery (particularly abdominal wall defects, ano-rectal malformations and assessment of long-term outcomes); hypospadias (including aetiological factors); burns, with special reference to prediction of burn wound healing and the role of fibrocytes in acute burn wounds and scarring; surgical education, including evaluation of the use of novel technology and simulation learning. Other members of the department have an interest in Hirschsprung's disease and Trauma, including prevention and evaluation of long-term outcomes. The advanced research would be of assistance to individuals wishing to pursue a career in Academic Surgery or obtain additional research and clinical experience prior to a consultant appointment.

Candidates from a scientific background would be encouraged to undertake either a Masters or Doctor of Philosophy research degree through the University of Sydney. Medically qualified applicants would be encouraged to enrol for a Masters or Doctor of Philosophy research degree, or may conduct a Paediatric Research project as part of the University's Master of Surgery by coursework degree.

Applicants should have either a 2:1 or higher Honours Science degree or an MB, BS degree. Demonstrated excellence in English language communication skills, both verbal and written, will be required. Excellent interpersonal skills and a mature outlook are essential. Applicants must be capable of working independently under instruction in addition to readily working with other members of the department in a team environment. Successful candidates would be expected to have some experience in oral presentation of their research in addition to several publications in the peer-reviewed literature.

Australian citizens and permanent residents would be eligible to apply for an Australian Postgraduate Scholarship Award to cover their student fees. Candidates would receive assistance in applying for a Research Grant or Scholarship to fund their study. Several opportunities exist for medically qualified candidates for further top-up of these scholarships with an additional salary from CHW for out of hours clinical work or a part-time (up to one day per week) appointment as a Lecturer with the University of Sydney for responsibility for assistance with medical student teaching. Candidates with an interest in medical education research would be eligible for a Medical Educational Fellow co-appointment with the CHW and the University of Sydney.

Interested applicants should contact Associate Professor Andrew J A Holland on 02 9845 1908 or email andrewh3@chw.edu.au.

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