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1. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's business as usual at the ESA secretariat – the ESA Executive continues to meet monthly in Melbourne and the full Management Committee recently commenced quarterly teleconferences. With the new financial year approaching, financial matters, especially the issue of subscription rates (raised at the last AGM), have been high on the agenda. The Committee continues to explore means of reducing administrative costs and increasing non-subscription income, some of which will be reflected in the next ESA budget.

The second half of 2008 will feature two exciting educational events – the 3rd ESA Epilepsy Master Class and the 23rd ESA Annual Scientific Meeting. I look forward to seeing many of you at these events. □

2. MEMBERSHIP

Following completion of the 2007-8 subscription drive, the ESA has 242 active members. Membership is down slightly on last year due to the loss of some New Zealand and lay members, and fewer ASM-related subscriptions in 2007.

Please encourage your neurologist, trainee, scientist, nursing, neuropsychologist, neurosurgical

and technologist colleagues working in epilepsy and related fields to consider joining the ESA. Remember, the ability of our Society to achieve its goals depends on a large and diverse range of clinical, scientific and technical members. Heads of clinical and research programs might consider checking whether their key staff are ESA members, and consider subsidising subscriptions of junior staff. □

3. FINANCIAL MATTERS

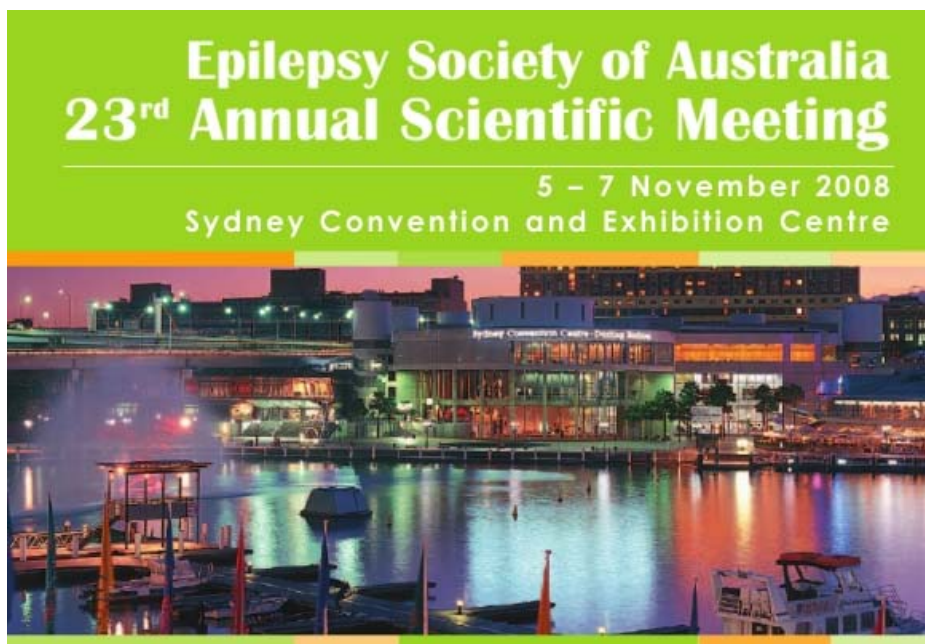
From June 30, ESA subscriptions rates will rise by approximately 50% to cover the costs of administering the Society and providing the various training opportunities and awards. The Special Group rate will still be available for trainees, students, nurses, technologists, psychologists and other allied health workers. The Ordinary subscription rate will be \$150+GST and the Special Group subscription rate will be \$75+GST. Subscription notices will be posted at

the end of June and will be payable with that notice or with registration for the Master Class or ASM.

The ESA currently has an application for Deductible Gift Recipient status with the ATO. If this is approved, then the ESA will then set up a Foundation Fund to receive tax-deductible donations for our research and training programs. □

4. ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING

Planning for the 2008 Annual Scientific Meeting is well underway, thanks to Andrew Bleasel and the Sydney-based ASM organising committee. Symposia will be held on extratemporal epilepsy and surgery, developmental insults and childhood onset epilepsy, and AED treatment and complications. Confirmed international speakers are Dr Gregory Holmes (Dartmouth Medical School, USA),



Epilepsy Society of Australia
23rd Annual Scientific Meeting
5 – 7 November 2008
Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre

Now calling for abstracts. Visit the conference web page for more information:
http://www.epilepsy-society.org.au/pages/conf_ASM2008.php

Prof Byung-In Lee (Yonsei University College of Medicine, South Korea), and Prof Philippe Ryvlin (Hospices Civils de Lyon et Université Claude Bernard, France).

The online abstract submission system is now open, and will remain open until Friday 25 July. Registration material will be sent in a couple of months. Information can be found at

http://www.epilepsy-society.org.au/pages/conf_ASM2008.php

We look forward to your support of this meeting and hope for the largest attendance yet at an ESA Annual Scientific Meeting. □

5. MASTER CLASS

The 3rd ESA Epilepsy Master Class will be held in Melbourne at the Novotel St Kilda on Saturday 16 August with special guest moderator Prof David Chadwick from the UK. The course is directed at neurology trainees and practising neurologists, but more experienced neurologists and epileptologists might well find the discussions instructive.

Formal invitations will be posted in May and places are limited to 100 delegates. Please email the ESA for further information and expressions of interest, or to receive an electronic copy of the flyer that was posted to ESA members.

The ESA is grateful for the generous sponsorship provided once again by UCB Pharma. □

6. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

International Affairs The 7th Asian & Oceanian Epilepsy Congress is being held in Xiamen, China in May. ESA members contributing to the main sessions and the Congress organisation include Ingrid Scheffer,

Sam Berkovic, David Reutens, Graeme Jackson, Amanda Wood and Andrew Bleasel.

Andrew Bleasel will again assist Dr Shih-Hui Lim and Prof CT Tan with the pre-congress ASEPA EEG Course and Examinations in May. Later in the year, Simon Harvey, Andrew Bleasel and Michelle Kiley will participate in ASEPA EEG courses in Hanoi, Tianjing (China) and Hong Kong respectively. Earlier this year, Ernie Somerville, John Dunne, Lakshmi Nagarajan and Wendyl D'Souza joined CT Tan (ILAE VP) in presenting an ASEPA workshop on Epileptic Syndromes in Bangladesh.

A decision will be made during a regional committee meeting at the Xiamen AOEC about whether the 2010 AOEC will go to Australia or the Philippines. The decision will come down to a vote by regional ILAE and IBE committee members. David Reutens represents Australia as Secretary of the ILAE Commission on Asian and Oceanian Affairs. Australia does not have a representative on the relevant IBE regional committees.



L-R: Ernie Somerville, Wendyl D'Souza, Lakshmi Nagarajan, and John Dunne in front of Independence Monument in Dhaka, Bangladesh

An exciting development for training of epileptologists in our region is the sponsorship of the ESA Asian-Oceanian Fellowship by Janssen-Cilag from next year. Their sponsorship will afford an increase in the stipend paid to fellows and reduce pressure on the ESA budget. The ESA is extremely grateful to Janssen-Cilag for their generosity.

Driving There has been significant progress made by the Driving Subcommittee through negotiations with national and state-based driving agencies. The NSW RTA, Vicroads and Queensland Transport have agreed to pilot a standard form and computer-based decision tree developed by the ESA/ANZAN Driving Committee, to assist with determination of fitness to drive in patients with epilepsy, first seizures and syncope. This will probably be done by the trial form accompanying the usual medical form that patients receive with their license renewal application. The doctor will be asked to fill in the old form as they normally would but also to fill in the new pilot form. This form collects factual data about the patient's episodes rather than an opinion from the treating doctor and does not ask for a decision or recommendation regarding fitness to hold a driver license. The data provided will then be entered into the algorithm, a strict interpretation of Austroads standards, by the driver licensing authority to determine fitness to drive or to trigger referral for medical review. The aims of the pilot project are to see whether the form is usable by doctors and to see how many medical reviews it generates.



The NSW DPP has determined that the neurologist referred to him by the Coroner has no charge to answer.

In response to efforts from a number of neurologists, including John Dunne and Nick Lawn, the WA government has passed legislation to require drivers to report medical conditions that might impair driving, including epilepsy.

Drugs and Devices The Drugs and Devices Subcommittee has prepared a draft position statement on the use of generic AEDs for consideration by the ESA Committee. Following review, this will likely be made available on the website for wider comment. The Subcommittee is also reviewing the need for position statements or guidelines on monitoring for bone disease during AED treatment, HLA testing for risk of Stevens-Johnson syndrome with AEDs, and the reported increase in symptoms of depression with AED use. Those wishing to contribute to this process should contact the ESA for more information.

The MSAC submission for VNS procedural items has moved further through the review process, with a draft final report having been prepared by MSAC and being considered by the ESA, the Neurosurgical Society of Australasia and Aurora Bioscience. We are hoping for a favourable response in the mid year. □

7. WEBSITE

Recently, presentations from the 2007 Adelaide ASM were uploaded for viewing.

We are still looking for more groups to add to the research "portal" that was added last year; please email the ESA with details

about your group if you would like it listed. □

8. AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Dr Vinayan Puthenveetil, from Kerala in southern India, has been awarded the 2008 ESA Asian Oceanian Fellowship. Dr Vinayan is a bright young paediatric neurologist who will train with Deepak Gill and Andrew Bleasel at Children's Hospital, Westmead.

The ESA is pleased to announce Dr Kim Powell as the recipient of the Molly McDonnell Foundation Scholarship for 2008. Although Dr Chris French was announced as the recipient at the Annual Scientific Meeting last year, Dr French has had to decline the scholarship after accepting the inaugural Richard Bickart Clinician Researcher Fellowship from the University of Melbourne. Congratulations to both Dr Powell and Dr French.

The closing date for applications for the ESA UCB Pharma Clinical Scholarship is June 30 this year. UCB Pharma Australia offers an annual scholarship to the ESA to assist young physicians undertaking specialised training in epilepsy. The one-year Scholarship is tenable at any Australian teaching hospital for a maximum of 12 months. Eligibility criteria and application instructions are available at

http://www.epilepsy-society.org.au/pages/fellowships_ucb_pharma.php

Nominations for the Peter Bladin Award are now being accepted. This award is the Society's highest honour, recognising a member for outstanding service to epilepsy in Australia. Nomination instructions are available at

http://www.epilepsy-society.org.au/pages/awards_pbaward.php

Nominations for the Peter Blain Award close June 30. □

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

May 15-18

7th Asian & Oceanian Epilepsy Congress
Xiamen, China

June 1-8

2nd Migrating Course on Epilepsy
Trakai, Lithuania

July 28 - August 8

7th International Course on Epilepsy
Venice, Italy

August 16

3rd ESA Epilepsy Master Class
Melbourne

September 21-25

8th European Congress on Epileptology
Berlin, Germany

October 23-25

Epilepsy at the Cutting Edge: A symposium to honor Fred and Eva Andermann
Montreal, Canada

November 5-7

23rd Epilepsy Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting
Sydney

Details for these conferences, and others, can be found at

<http://www.epilepsy-society.org.au/pages/conferences.php> □

Going somewhere?

If your contact details have changed, let us know!

enquiries@epilepsy-society.org.au