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1. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

At the end of my first year as ESA President, I reflect positively on the hard work and achievements of the ESA Committee and various Subcommittees during 2007.

Much work was done by the Committee and Executive in reviewing the Society's financial position, resulting in reprioritising of our expenditure and looking at different ways to increase income and reduce expenses, putting the Society in better standing for the coming years. A review of the Society's membership led to clarification of our regulations, aligning membership in our Society with that of the ILAE and other national chapters. Much work was done improving the look and functionality of the ESA website and newsletter, hopefully leading to better communication with members. The Annual Scientific Meetings are a lot of work for the organising committee and executive each year, but always a rewarding experience when they prove successful, as occurred again in Adelaide. A pleasing aspect of the Society's work has been the awarding of travel, clinical and research scholarships to bright young epileptologists and trainees, and the honouring of our senior colleagues through the Peter Bladin Award, as occurred in 2007.

Australia remains an important regional player in the international epilepsy movement, with members holding key positions in the ILAE CAO and ASEPA, and participating in training activities in East Timor and other SE Asian locations. In 2007, significant progress was made in negotiations with the National Transport Commission and state driver licensing agencies regarding assessment of fitness to drive in people with epilepsy, and new standards for EEG training were implemented by ANZAN, a credit to the hard work of the Driving and EEG Committees.

A disappointing outcome for 2007 was the inability of the various state and national epilepsy support organisations to unite as a single, powerful and efficient organisation, representing Australia in the IBE and working closely with the ESA to influence social policy for people affected by epilepsy; fortunately, they each remain effective providers of support for their clients and continue to explore ways to work together nationally.

In 2008, we look forward to a decision on the bid for the 2010 Asian

Oceanian Epilepsy Congress, successful passage of the VNS item number application through the MSAC, an Epilepsy Masterclass in Melbourne (probably in August), the Annual Scientific Meeting in Sydney in November, and further progress with driver licensing policy.

I would like to express my thanks to the ESA Committee members, and in particular my Executive colleagues of Jill Bicknell-Royle, Terry O'Brien and Mark Newton, and to the Subcommittee chairs and members, for all their work during 2007. Special thanks also to Vera Kung, for her administrative assistance and work on the ESA website and newsletter, and to Carmel Jacobson, for her work. Thanks should also go to our industry colleagues, especially UCB Pharma, who generously support the ESA Annual Scientific Meeting and the various educational activities like the EEG Course, the Clinical Scholarship and the Masterclass, and to the Molly McDonnell Foundation who generously support a research



Are you listed?

The ESA will be updating its membership list on the ILAE chapter website on January 25. If you said "yes" to having your details being disclosed to ILAE on your membership form, you will receive news and information from ILAE, and your name and email address will be listed on the membership list on **the website**. If you would like to change your ILAE disclosure permission, please **email us** before the above date.

scholarship each year. Finally, I would like to thank all the members of our Society for their continued support of the ESA, working with the Society to achieve the common goal of improving care, training and research in epilepsy in Australia. As always, feedback on ESA matters and processes is greatly appreciated.

Best wishes for 2008. □

2. MEMBERSHIP

In October, a proposal for changes to the ESA Rules and Regulations regarding membership eligibility was circulated to all active ESA members. The proposal outlined changes which were aimed at aligning the ESA regulations with those of the ILAE, promoting New Zealand membership of the newly-formed NZ ILAE chapter, aiming to recruit more non-neurologist members with clinical/scientific/technical qualifications, and promoting separate membership of the IBE-related epilepsy support organisation. A Special Resolution was passed at the AGM in November, with an amendment to allow continued membership of epilepsy lay workers without clinical/scientific/technical qualifications who were active members up until that time.

Members are asked to encourage their epilepsy colleagues in neurosurgery, neuropsychology, nursing, EEG/MRI technology, allied health disciplines and basic science to join the ESA, at the Special Group discount rate if appropriate. Our Society will only fulfill its broad objectives if it is truly multidisciplinary. The ENSIGA nursing group is a good example of how active recruitment within a subspeciality

can influence and stimulate our Society's activities.

Reminder notices for 2007-8 membership were sent at the end of December and it is requested that non-financial members please pay up ASAP. Membership subscriptions will increase for the 2008-9 year. □

3. FINANCIAL MATTERS

As mentioned in the Spring newsletter, the ESA finished the 2006-7 financial year with another operating loss, due largely to payouts for scholarships and other training activities. A new financial strategy aimed at increasing income and reducing expenditure was discussed and approved by the ESA Management Committee meeting and presented at the AGM in November. The recommendations included (1) reducing funding for the East Timor Epilepsy Project and the Australian

Pregnancy Register, as these projects had proved successful in gaining independent financial support, (2) ceasing funding for the ILAE ASEPA Imaging Workshops run by Australian epileptologists, this to be picked up by ASEPA, (3) increasing the ESA membership subscription in 2008-9 and being stricter with access to Special Group discount rate, presently accessed by 40% members, and (3) exploring the possibilities of a permanent secretariat for ESA administration and establishing an ESA Foundation for philanthropic donations. □

4. ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING

The 2007 Annual Meeting was held in Adelaide with over 200 registrants attending the 3-day meeting with four international



A platform presentation at the 2007 ASM in Adelaide.

speakers. Many thanks to Michelle Kiley, Lejla Mehmedagic (SAPMEA) and their local teams for organising and hosting this highly successful meeting. Andrew Bleasel and the ASM Committee are currently planning for the 2008 meeting to be held in Sydney on November 5-7, preceded by the ANZAN EEG Course. Venues, symposia topics and potential speakers are being currently discussed, so please forward any suggestions to Andrew Bleasel. For those thinking about 2009, please make a note that the meeting will be in Perth, probably in the first week in November. □

5. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

International Affairs The International Affairs subcommittee recently reviewed 4 applications for the 2008 Asian Oceanian scholarship, a final decision pending review by Prof CT Tan (ASEPA Chair and ILAE Vice-President) and Dr Shih Hui Lim (CAOA Chair). Dr Parampreet Singh returned to Chandigarh, India in October after spending a year training at the Austin Hospital, and Dr Jithangi Wanigasinghe will finish her training at the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne later in 2008. The Management Committee reaffirmed at its recent meeting that this scholarship was a funding priority for the Society, given the impact that the training makes in neighbouring countries.

A decision on the 2010 AOEC has yet to be made by the ILAE and IBE. This will presumably be done by the 2008 AOEC in Xiamen, China.

Driving Progress in negotiations with the National Transport Commission and the state driver licensing agencies continues, due in

large part to Ernie Somerville's vigour and the action taken by neurologists to not "tick the box". There has been relatively broad acceptance of the DLAs needing to be the ones to certify fitness to drive, neurologists providing medical information rather than opinions or recommendations, and the need for medical advisory panels. The Driving Subcommittee is currently developing a form for neurologists and a decision tree for DLA clerks to facilitate determination of fitness to drive in straightforward cases. The ESA recommends that neurologists continue with the previously adopted action of certifying only those patients in whom there is no doubt they fulfil or do not fulfil national guidelines, and in all other cases provide only medical information without "ticking the box".

Drugs and Devices The VNS item number application is still with the MSAC, a decision hopefully being made by May 2008. The issue of generic prescription continues to concern industry and the ESA has been asked to provide a position statement. Sanofi-Aventis has withdrawn IV Epilim from MIMS and does not anticipate it being launched in Australia this year, due to ongoing manufacturing and supply problems in Europe.

Neuroscience Trials Australia, a not-for-profit organisation which aims to attract and coordinate RCTs of drugs in neurological diseases, is keen to work with the ESA and its members' centres in antiepileptic drug trials around the country. NTA is currently active in stroke and movement disorders. If members have opinions about this that they would like to communicate to the ESA, please contact Sam Berkovic or Simon Harvey.

EEG The level 1 EEG training has been accepted by the RACP as a core

part of the ANZAN neurology training scheme. A series of educational and practical exposures is expected to be completed in a period of 6 weeks which can be spread over the 2 years of training. The trainees should understand what is involved in EEG technology, what training is required to correctly interpret EEG and the clinical utility of the EEG. The trainees would not be equipped to read their own EEGs after this exposure during core neurology training. Attendance at the EEG course is part of level 1 training and needs to be completed by the trainees within the 2 years. The issue of level 2/3 training is more complex and requires further clarification of specific sites able to offer level 2/3 training, based on the number of EEGs performed at a particular site, the number of accredited electroencephalographers to teach EEG, and the range of experience available including video EEG, ECoG and intracranial EEG monitoring. Criteria to allow laboratories to be accredited to provide level 2 training will be drafted by the EEG Subcommittee, drawing on the technical standards of the American Board of Clinical Neurophysiology, for review by the ESA and ANZAN Committees. Andrew Bleasel and John Dunne would be happy to receive comments from members about the EEG training scheme.

East Timor Epilepsy Project The security situation in East Timor and an interruption to AusAID funding impacted on the ESA visits and training during 2007. However, the country is now more peaceful, and with a further year of AusAID funding to

supplement the ESA funding, a full timetable of training visits is scheduled for 2008. An epilepsy workshop with the Cuban doctors working in East Timor has also been agreed to. It is anticipated that the ETEP will be completed in 2009. The Society extends thanks to Ernie Somerville and his neurologist and nursing colleagues for undertaking this much needed training in an underdeveloped neighbouring country.

Australian Pregnancy Register The APR continues to accept and process referrals for pregnant women taking antiepileptic drugs for epilepsy and other conditions. Their Board is working well and they have adequate funding through sponsorship. In 2007, the APR published 6 papers from their work, all available by searching Medline using Frank Vajda and his colleagues in the author field. Congratulations to the APR on a very productive last year. □

6. WEBSITE

Vera Kung and the Executive continue to update the website with news items, scholarship details and new educational content. Selected presentations from the 2007 ASM will soon be available. Photos from the meeting are also available for viewing.

We welcome feedback from members about the website and any new content (e.g. news items, clinical guidelines, useful internet-based resources) that could be included. □

7. AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Congratulations to Dr Andrew Black and Prof Frank Vajda who

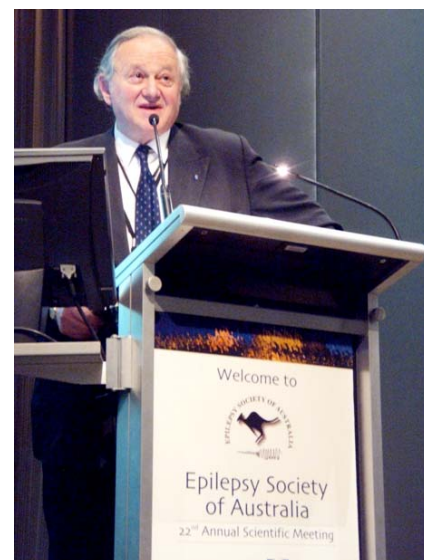


Peter Bladin Award recipient Dr Andrew Black.

were each presented with the Peter Bladin Award at the 2007 Annual Scientific Meeting in Adelaide. Andrew and Frank are both founding members and Past-Presidents of the ESA, having both made significant contributions to the field of epilepsy and our Society, Andrew most notably as a "driving force" behind the review of fitness to drive guidelines and legislation, and Frank most notably as a leader in clinical neuropharmacology and the Director of the Australian Pregnancy Register for Women on Anti-Epileptic Drugs.

Also in Adelaide at the ASM, Dr Chris French was awarded the Molly McDonnell Foundation Scholarship for 2008 and Dr Cassandra Szoeki was awarded the UCB Pharma Clinical Scholarship for 2008; congratulations to both successful applicants. These and other scholarships will be available in the 2008 for 2009 funding, the details being available on the ESA website at

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



Peter Bladin Award recipient Prof Frank Vajda.

Please note that the UCB Scholarship deadline has been brought forward to allow awarding midyear.

In the last quarter, ESA Travel Scholarships were awarded to Dr Stefanie Dedeurwaerdere and Mr Thomas Zheng to attend the American Epilepsy Society Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. Travel Scholarship applications for the 7th Asian & Oceanian Epilepsy Congress close March 31.

Finally, congratulations go to Prof Ingrid Scheffer who received the American Epilepsy Society Research Recognition Award for Clinical Science. This award is given annually to recognise a distinguished history of research for which has improved understanding, diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy. Ingrid's epilepsy research has explored many areas of epileptology with a particular focus on the genetics of the epilepsies and epilepsy syndrome classification. Congratulations to Ingrid on this

prestigious and well-deserved award. □



Prof Ingrid Scheffer received the American Epilepsy Society Research Recognition Award for Clinical Science.

8. OTHER NEWS

Thank you to UCB Pharma for sponsoring four paediatric neurologists and trainees to attend the annual J Kiffin Penry Program held in North Carolina, a one-week course in paediatric epilepsy. The attendees were Simon Williams from Perth, Michael Fahey and Jay Srinivasan from Melbourne and Stephen Malone from Brisbane.

Lastly, a reminder that the deadline for abstract submission for The 7th Asian & Oceanian Epilepsy Congress is January 15 – details about abstract submission can be found at

<http://www.epilepsyxiamen2008.org/abstracts.html>

Registration for the congress has also opened. Please note that early registration discount ends on February 15. □

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS

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

September 21-25

8th European Congress on Epileptology
Berlin, Germany

November 5-7

23rd Epilepsy Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting
Sydney



L-R: Simon Williams, Michael Fahey, Jay Srinivasan, and Stephen Malone

2009

June 28 – July 2

28th International Epilepsy Congress
Budapest, Hungary

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, please remember to let us know by emailing

enquiries@epilepsy-society.org.au