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1. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The big news for the ESA has been the awarding of the 8th ILAE-IBE Asian Oceanian Epilepsy Congress to Australia, the decision being made during the 7th AOEC in Xiamen in May. Congress organising staff of the ILAE-IBE have visited Australia twice this year, negotiating with convention bureaus and hotels in different cities with the aim of securing the best conference venue for the Congress. A report and recommendation has been submitted to the ILAE and IBE

executives and the ESA and Joint Epilepsy Council of Australia anticipate receiving a decision from the International Director of Meetings in the next week or two. Watch the ESA News page on the website for the decision.

The 8th AOEC will likely be in the Spring of 2010 and will be the second opportunity for Australia to host a large, international epilepsy congress, the last time being in Sydney in 1995 with the International Epilepsy Congress. Thank you to everyone who helped with the submission to the ILAE and IBE. Members who are interested in being involved in planning of the scientific and social programs should contact the ESA Secretariat.

Another highlight of the last quarter was the ESA Master Class, held in Melbourne on August 16th with Prof David Chadwick as the guest moderator. Sam Berkovic and Ernie Somerville organised a stimulating

program of challenging cases and discussion, covering important clinical issues relating to drug treatment, pregnancy, contraception and driving. Thanks to the presenters and table moderators who gave up their weekend and a special thanks to Gina Drake and her colleagues at UCB Pharma for sponsoring and organising the Master Class. Hopefully, the Master Class will continue as an important biennial event on the ESA's educational calendar.

The Annual Scientific Meeting is the next big event on the horizon and planning is well underway. I hope we will have the biggest turn out ever for an ASM, particularly given the full week of activities that are planned in Sydney. I look forward to seeing members and associates of the Society in Sydney, for the ASM and for our Annual General Meeting. □



Delegates at the ESA Epilepsy Master Class in Melbourne, August 2008, discussing a problematic case presented by Prof Sam Berkovic. Can you spot the guest moderator, Prof David Chadwick?



2. FINANCIAL MATTERS

The ESA's financial position remains an area of constant focus for the Committee and the Executive. The ESA finished the 2008 financial year with an operating loss of \$122,000. One reason for the large loss was the "writing off" of \$68,000 of ESA pledged funds for the East Timor Epilepsy Project, the money to be kept separate from the operating account and spent over the years ahead. Significant expenses incurred during the last year related to the Asian Oceanian fellowship, ASM 2008 expenses and administration. The Committee is keen to reduce costs where possible, and as members are aware, was forced to increase membership subscriptions this year in line with increased administrative costs. The Committee reviewed the possibility of outsourcing its secretariat services in an attempt to improve efficiency and lower costs, but decided against this because of concerns about loss of control and the impression that the costs would not be significantly less. The concept of a permanent secretariat in a capital city remains a topic of discussion. The 2008-9 budget was approved by the Committee, with anticipation of finishing the 2009 financial year in a better position.

A Special General Meeting was held on August 16 at which time two changes to our Rules and Regulations were passed unanimously. Sixty-one members were present and 36 proxies were received. The inclusion of the standard "wind up" clause for a not-for-profit organisation and the granting of Deductible Gift Recipient status to the ESA by the ATO now mean that the ESA can set up a

fund or foundation to solicit and receive tax-deductible donations. Combined with a fund raising strategy, the ESA hopes to raise funds to provide research and clinical scholarships, awards, and training projects. Healthy profits from our ASMs and hopefully the 8th AOEC could also be administered by such a fund or foundation, separate to the general administration of the Society. □

3. MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions for 2008-9 membership are being received presently. Members seem to have accepted the increased subscription rates, with no obvious downturn in membership. There is opportunity to pay your subscription with your Annual Scientific Meeting registration, as in previous years.

Please encourage your colleagues and trainees in epilepsy care and research to join the ESA, especially those working in nursing, neurosurgery, EEG technology, neuropsychology, allied health and research areas who are underrepresented. As the ILAE Chapter for Australia, the ESA encourages Australian clinicians, scientists and technologists involved in the diagnosis, treatment and research of epilepsy to join the Society and share in its common interests, aspirations and endeavours. □

4. ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING

Program and Registration details for the 23rd Epilepsy Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting in Sydney from November 5-7 are available at

<http://www.sapmea.asn.au/conventions/esa2008/>

Andrew Bleasel and his ASM Subcommittee have prepared an interesting and diverse program with symposia on extratemporal epilepsy surgery, AED treatment and complications, and developmental issues in epilepsy. Registration fees have been kept the same as last year, despite the increased costs of holding the conference in Sydney. Nearly 100 abstracts were submitted and these are currently being reviewed.

Unfortunately, Prof Greg Holmes has had to pull out of the ASM due to an unforeseen meeting conflict. It is too late to find an international replacement and therefore the program has been modified slightly to accommodate this change. Our other two international guests, Profs Byung-in Lee and Phillippe Ryvlin, and a team of local experts will certainly make the meeting a success.

The ASM will again be preceded by the ANZAN EEG Course, and this year will be followed by a program for people with epilepsy, conducted by Epilepsy Action. Please make sure to attend the conference and encourage your colleagues to attend also. □

5. ASIA AND OCEANIA

In March, Oscar Alvarez, a Spanish neuropsychiatry registrar at Royal Melbourne Hospital, and Ernie Somerville conducted epilepsy workshops with the Cuban Medical Brigade in three towns in East Timor. Oscar did a great job of breaking the ice and his language skills were indispensable. The Cuban doctors were extremely enthusiastic and eager to learn. There are about



John Dunne (centre front) and Ernie Somerville (fourth from right) with nurses in Aileu, East Timor.

300 Cuban doctors in East Timor on 2-year rotations. There are also 600 Timorese students at medical schools in Cuba.

Simon Harvey participated in an ASEPA EEG and Epilepsy Workshop in Vietnam in June, and in ASEPA Epilepsy Surgery Workshop in Indonesia in August. Andrew Bleasel assisted in the ASEPA EEG exams in China in May. Andrew Bleasel and Michelle Kiley will be participating in EEG Workshops in China and Hong Kong later in the year. ESA members who would like to participate in ASEPA teaching activities, funded by the ILAE, should please contact Simon Harvey or Andrew Bleasel (ASEPA Secretary).

Dr Jithangi Wanigasinghe (2007 ESA Asian Oceanian Fellow) returned to Sri Lanka in June. She flew back with digital video-EEG monitoring equipment donated by the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne and Compumedics Australia. Jithangi joins Dr Pyara Ratnayake, who trained at Westmead Hospital in 2007, working in paediatric neurology and epilepsy at the Colombo Children's Hospital. Jithangi and Pyara will host an ASEPA Epilepsy and EEG Workshop in October 2008. Hopefully this will be the start of a burgeoning epilepsy program and ILAE chapter



(L-R) Simon Harvey, Jithangi Wanigasinghe, and Jeremy Freeman at Melbourne Airport with video-EEG monitoring equipment that accompanied Jithangi back to Sri Lanka.

in Sri Lanka, assisted in part by the ESA.

Dr Vinayan Puthenveetil from Kerala, India (2008 ESA Asian Oceanian Fellow) is waiting on immigration and medical registration formalities to start work at Westmead Hospital under the supervision of Deepak Gill.

The importance of the ESA Asian Oceanian Fellowship to assist neurologists in Asia to train in epilepsy was recognised earlier this year by Janssen-Cilag who agreed to sponsor the fellowship from 2009, at an increased level to help with the high living costs in Australian capital cities. Applications for the 2009 Fellowship close at the end of September, details being available at

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

Please note that the Fellowship is intended for young neurologists in Asia who have good English and medical training, and have approached an Australian centre and epileptologist about training with them. The Society does not however make recommendations to applicants, nor match applicants with centres. The process of selection will be performed by the International Affairs subcommittee and be assisted by the Chairs of the CAO and ASEPA. □

6. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Drugs and Devices The ESA Committee and the Drugs and Devices Subcommittee have been busy reviewing drug alerts and preparing guidelines and position statements. Documents under review at present, which will hopefully soon be available on the ESA website, cover the substitution of innovator and generic AEDs, HLA testing for risk of Stevens Johnson syndrome with carbamazepine, managing bone health in patients on AEDs, and the risk of suicidal ideation with AED usage. These will soon be available on the website for members' comments.

Driving After the Austroads Registration and Licensing Task Force's agreement to pilot the ESA/ANZAN scheme of certification by the licensing authority using information provided by the treating doctor, progress has been slow. Meetings have been held with the NSW RTA and a meeting with VicRoads will occur in September to discuss implementation of the pilot in both states. The authorities insisted on endorsement by the AMA, which has now been obtained.

John Dunne's facts about driving with epilepsy, presented at the ESA Master Class, will soon be available on the driving page of the ESA website. □

7. AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

The recipient of this year's UCB ESA Clinical Scholarship is Dr Kee Meng Tan. Dr Tan is from Brisbane and trained in neurology and epilepsy at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, USA. He

will spend 2009 working with Terry O'Brien and his team at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, prior to returning to epileptology practice in Brisbane. The ESA is grateful for the support provided by UCB Pharma towards training young epileptologists in Australia.

Applications for the Molly McDonnell Foundation Scholarship close August 31. Application details can be found at

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

The ESA is grateful for the generous support provided by the Molly McDonnell Foundation for research into epilepsy treatment.

The ESA is accepting applications for ESA Travel Scholarships to attend the American Epilepsy Society Annual Scientific Meeting. No applications were received for the Xiamen AOEC or the Berlin EEC. Details can be found at

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

8. OTHER NEWS

Dr Stephen Malone recently returned to Brisbane from Toronto and Miami where he has been for the past 4 years working as a paediatric epilepsy fellow. Stephen and his paediatric neurology colleagues in Brisbane will be strengthening the epilepsy program at the Mater and Royal Children's Hospitals.

Prof David Reutens has left Monash University and Monash Medical Centre to take up the posts of Foundation Chair in Experimental Neurology and be the Foundation Director of the University of Queensland Centre for Advanced Imaging.

The Society is seeking the details of Australian epilepsy

programs and supervisors who would be willing to take suitable trainees from Asia and Oceania for one year's ESA-funded training, to post on the website. This would appear similar to the Research page

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

that can be added to if groups wish to send their details to the ESA secretariat. □

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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 3-4

ANZAN EEG Course
Sydney

November 5-7

23rd Epilepsy Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting
Sydney

November 8

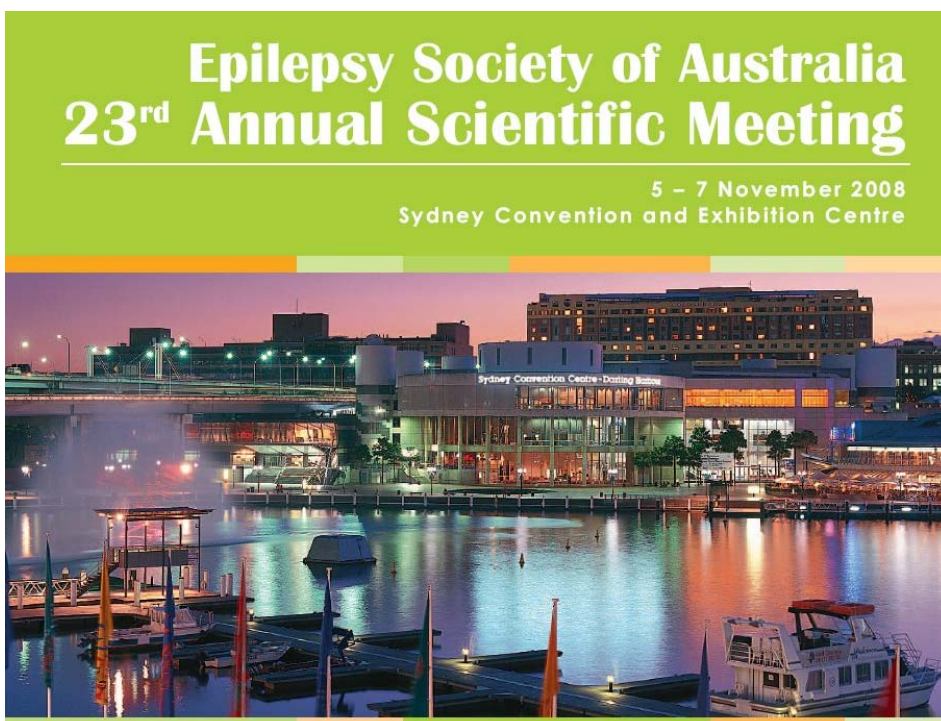
Epilepsy Action Top of Mind Symposium
Sydney

December 5-9

62nd American Epilepsy Society Annual Meeting
Seattle, USA

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

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



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

<http://www.sapmea.asn.au/conventions/esa2008/>
Early Bird Registration Deadline : Monday, 29 September 2008