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1. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This newsletter marks the end of the three year term of the Melbourne-based Executive and Secretariat and is thus the last newsletter with me as President. At the recent AGM, a new Committee and Sydney-based Executive were elected, and over the summer, the ESA Secretariat operations will move from Melbourne to Sydney. The new ESA Committee members are Andrew Bleasel (President), Ann Bye (Vice President), Armin Mohamed (Treasurer), Deepak Gill (Secretary), Ernest Somerville, Simon Harvey, Terence O'Brien, John Archer, John Dunne, Nick Lawn, Michelle Kiley and Dan McLaughlin. I extend my personal thanks to Sam Berkovic, Jill Bicknell-Royle, Mark Newton, Lakshmi Nagarajan and Cecile Lander who served on the Committee over the last 1-3 years.

Looking back over the term of this Executive, I believe that the ESA Committee has achieved much including, tightening up of ESA membership regulations, encouragement of development of the NZ ILAE chapter, improving the ESA's financial position, securing and increasing sponsorship of fellowships, reduction of secretariat and conference expenses, setting up

of a foundation fund with DGR status, obtaining exemption from income tax from the ATO, hosting of the 8th AOEC, strengthening of Australia's profile in epilepsy in Asia, presentation of a prominent position on issues related to health and public policy in epilepsy, development of several ESA position and information statements, encouragement of professional development for epilepsy nurses, improvement of electronic communication with members, efficient operation of the Secretariat, and overseeing of the Society's business, subcommittee activities and Annual Scientific Meetings. Personally, I would have liked to have achieved more during the term, such as attracting more neurologist and non-neurologist members to the Society, developing more web-based educational material for members, and assisting the non-medical epilepsy organisations to come together to provide a single, clear voice and delivery of efficient social services for people with epilepsy.

As in most professional societies run voluntarily by members, 90% of the work is done by 10% of the people. This is certainly the case in the ESA, and in some respects is

disappointing. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members and chairs of ESA committees for their hard work over the last three years, and make special mention of the work done in these roles by Ernie Somerville, Andrew Bleasel, John Dunne, Sam Berkovic, Terry O'Brien, Jill Bicknell-Royle, Lakshmi Nagarajan, Mark Newton and Dan McLaughlin. I would also like to acknowledge the administrative and IT work done by Vera Kung in running the operations of the ESA Secretariat, Carmel Jacobson from the BRI in keeping the ESA accounts in order, and Lejla Mehmedagic from SAPMEA in organising our last three ASMs. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the firm foundations laid by the previous, Perth-based Executive from which this Executive worked, and express my gratitude to the three immediate Past-Presidents for their advice and guidance during my term as President.

It has been an honour and a privilege to work on the ESA Committee and serve the ESA in the role of President. I encourage



The Melbourne secretariat (L-R): Terry O'Brien, Mark Newton, Vera Kung, Simon Harvey, Jill Bicknell-Royle, Carmel Jacobson.



all members to get behind their Society and contribute to its activities in some way. I wish Andrew Bleasel and the new office bearers all the best in their new roles. □

2. FINANCIAL MATTERS

The ESA's financial situation is stable, with expenditure now equalling income and the ESA moving into a period of break-even and profitable annual balances. The ESA's 30/6/09 financial statement and auditor's report were tabled and approved by members at the recent AGM.

In the last financial year, the ESA made half the loss projected, and in the current financial year, the ESA expects to make a small profit. The increased member subscription rate and the additional sponsorship of scholarships have offset the reduced ASM profit and investment income. The current financial model is for ESA subscriptions to cover administrative costs, and for income from sponsorship and conference profits to cover scholarships and other educational activities.

The ESA Foundation Fund has received donations totalling \$1400 to date, coming almost entirely from members. Members are requested to consider donating to epilepsy research via the ESA, either directly or by suggesting the ESA to potential benefactors. Epilepsy research conducted by ESA affiliated centres and organisations is highlighted on the ESA website at

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

The ESA is grateful for the ongoing financial support it receives from UCB Pharma, Janssen-Cilag and the Molly McDonnell Foundation to continue offering the various

scholarships and educational meetings. □

3. MEMBERSHIP

The ESA currently communicates with 340 "active" members, including 36 from the NZ ILAE Chapter. Approximately half the membership is made up of neurologists and other medical specialists, the remainder being neurology trainees, epilepsy nurses, EEG technologists, neuroscientists, psychologists and other allied health professionals. Unfortunately though, only 55% of these active members are financial. Active members who have not yet paid their 2009-2010 subscription will be sent one last reminder before the end of the year. As always, please encourage your clinical, technical and research colleagues to consider membership in our Society. A diverse membership base is important to achieve the goals of the ESA. □

4. WEBSITE

The ESA website provides information on committee and subcommittee activities, conference information, research information, and details of the various scholarships and awards. News items are added to the website regularly, and bundled into the monthly e-news that you receive.

ESA Position and Information statements are available online for AED brand substitution, HLA testing for hypersensitivity, AEDs and suicidality and bone health, with statements on AED treatment in pregnancy, patient monitoring during video-EEG, therapeutic drug monitoring and hypersensitivity in preparation.

From next year, an improved membership database will come online and interface directly with the

ESA website, accounting and emailing software. Members will be able to update their contact details and pay subscriptions from the website. Committee and Subcommittee members will be able to manage communications and share documents. The ESA secretariat will be able to communicate with members more easily, archive and retrieve digitised documents efficiently, and move between states with greater ease. □

5. ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING

The 24th ESA ASM was held in Perth at the beginning of the month, preceded by the ANZAN EEG Course. The ASM was convened by Lakshmi Nagarajan, with help from her Perth-based and interstate ASM Subcommittee colleagues. If you were not one of the 170 delegates, you missed one of the best! The smaller number of delegates promoted a more informal and interactive style to the ASM. Highlights were presentations on epilepsy and brain tumour management by Dr Rhadakrishnan (Trivandrum, India), Dr Charles Vecht (The Haig, Netherlands) and Mr Andrew Morokoff (RMH, Melbourne), an historical lecture on Hans Berger presented by John Dunne, a half day session on Epilepsy, Ethics and the Law, and a presentation on Equine Epilepsy following the Melbourne Cup.

The quality of scientific poster and platform presentations was again high, recognised by our invited overseas speakers. The best platform and poster prizes (\$1000 prize money each) were awarded to Damian Clark (A study of Epilepsy Related Deaths in the



Delegates at the 2009 Annual Scientific in Perth.

Queensland Population) and to Sarah Seth (Anti-epileptic Effects of Triptanoin in Two Chronic Mouse Epilepsy Models). The recipients of the 2010 UCB-ESA Clinical Scholarship (Dr Tyson Ware) and the 2009 Janssen-Cilag-ESA Asian Oceanian Scholarship (Dr Vinayan Puthenveettil) were presented with certificates by Dr Natasha Monin (UCB) and Dr Matthew Brown (J-C). The 2010 Molly McDonnell Foundation Scholarship was awarded to Ms Milena Gandy from RPA and the University of Sydney.

The ESA congratulates and thanks Lakshmi, the ASM Subcommittee, Lejla and the SAPMEA team for a highly successful meeting. If you missed it, look out for selected presentations and videos on the ESA website. □

6. AOEC 2010

As you know well, the ESA and JECA will co-host the 8th Asian Oceanian Epilepsy Congress at the new Melbourne Convention and

Exhibition Centre between October 20-24, 2010. The scientific program is finalized with confirmed sessions, speakers and presentations for the main program and workshops. Presentations will be given by 8 international, 43 regional and 22 Australian experts in their fields. The second announcement was recently sent out, abstract submission is now open, and early-bird registration is now available through the AOEC website. There is considerable international interest in the AOEC and it is hoped that the Congress will attract 2,000 delegates. Remember that the AOEC will replace the ESA ASM next year. The 2010 ESA AGM and ANZAN EEG Course will be held during the AOEC. Please encourage your colleagues from Australia and abroad to attend the AOEC. For more details, check out

<http://www.epilepsymelbourne2010.org/> □

7. ASIA AND OCEANIA

John Dunne, the newly-elected Secretary of the ILAE CAO, recently attended a combined CAO/ASEPA

meeting in Seoul to plan regional activities for the next 4 years. John and Ernie Somerville recently taught at an ASEPA epilepsy workshop in Ninxia, China, along with CT Tan and epileptologists from Japan and China. Terry O'Brien has been busy this month, examining in the ASEPA EEG Exams in Hong Kong, teaching in the ASEPA EEG Course in Beijing, and presenting on imaging at the 3rd Beijing International Epilepsy Forum. Andrew Black, John Dunne and Ernie Somerville visited East Timor this year to continue teaching of district nurses in epilepsy care. Simon Harvey conducted a paediatric epilepsy workshop in Colombo last month, with Jithangi Wanigasinghe and Pyara Ratnayake, past Australian epilepsy fellows. Sam Berkovic, Ingrid Scheffer and Simon Harvey gave epilepsy-related presentations at the recent World Congress of Neurology in Bangkok, attended by approximately 3000 delegates from Asia and around the world. Please contact Andrew Bleasel or John Dunne if you would like to participate in ASEPA teaching activities planned for 2010.

Congratulations to Dr Mel Michel Villaluz from the Philippines who has been awarded the 2010



Dr Jithangi Wanigasinghe (left, RCH Melbourne, 2007-8) and Dr Pyara Ratnayake (right, CHW Sydney 2006-7) reading EEGs at the children's hospital in Colombo, Sri Lanka; the equipment was donated by the RCH Melbourne and Compumedics Australia.

ESA Janssen-Cilag Asian-Oceanian Epilepsy Scholarship. Dr Villaluz will be spending 12 months with Prof Ingrid Scheffer and her team at the Austin Hospital, Melbourne, to learn clinical, EEG, imaging, genetics and treatment aspects of paediatric epilepsy. □

8. POLICY AREAS

Ernie Somerville and the Driving subcommittee recently submitted recommendations for changes to the national guidelines for Assessing Fitness To Drive with epilepsy. This followed successful completion of a pilot study in NSW and Victoria of a decision-tree model for license review and certification of fitness by DLA clerks. Mandatory reporting of unsafe drivers with epilepsy remains law in South Australia, and is being reconsidered in Queensland and Victoria; the ESA and the ANZAN remain strongly opposed to mandatory reporting.

The ESA made representation to the recent inquiry by the Parliamentary Friends of Epilepsy, highlighting the need for more specialist resources for people with epilepsy and the problems with accessing and funding new drug and device treatments. □

9. ESA MASTER CLASS

The biennial ESA Master Class will be held in Sydney in 2010, most likely on a weekend in late April or early May. The program will concentrate on practical, clinical issues in epilepsy diagnosis and treatment, and be directed towards general neurologists and trainees. UCB Pharma will again sponsor the Master Class. More details will follow in due course. □

10. AUSTRALIAN PREGNANCY REGISTER

The Australian Pregnancy Register celebrates its 10th Anniversary this year, with a celebration and half-day seminar at the Royal Melbourne Hospital on Friday November 20. The amazing achievements of the APR were presented by Terry O'Brien at recent ASM in Perth, most notably the dose-related effect of valproate in pregnancy, and the changes over the last 10 years in Australian prescribing practices during pregnancy and the prevalence of birth defects. The APR continues to recruit pregnant women with epilepsy and/or taking AEDs, and is involved in a study of neurocognitive outcomes. Please remember to refer appropriate women to the APR, ideally by calling the APR hotline on 1800 069 722.



11. EPILEPSY ACTION AND EPILEPSY AUSTRALIA

The ESA congratulates Epilepsy Action Australia on a successful epilepsy forum held in Perth prior to the ASM, attended by more than 200 patients, parents and carers. Congratulations also to Epilepsy Action Australia and the George Institute on obtaining NHMRC funding of the SEISMIC study of the epidemiology and impact of new-onset epilepsy in Sydney.

Congratulations to the Joint Epilepsy Council of Australia which

encouraged the Parliamentary Friends of Epilepsy to hold an inquiry into the prevalence and impact of epilepsy, held in Canberra on October 30th. This followed on from many meetings with politicians and ministerial advisors during the year. The inquiry received more than 350 written submissions and heard presentations from JECA, the ESA and several other groups. Areas discussed included access to new AEDs, availability of specialist services and EEG services, education and training of health and education professionals in epilepsy, VNS funding, epilepsy research and community services. The committee's report is eagerly awaited. □

12. UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

November 20

Australian Pregnancy Register
10th Anniversary Research
Symposium
*Royal Melbourne Hospital Function
Centre, Melbourne*

December 4-8

American Epilepsy Society 63rd
Annual Meeting
Boston, USA

2010

February 3-6

38th Annual Meeting of
International Neuropsychological
Society
Acapulco, Mexico

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

[http://www.epilepsy-society.org.au/
pages/conferences.php](http://www.epilepsy-society.org.au/pages/conferences.php) □

Epilepsy Society of Australia

Spring 2009



2009 ESA Annual Scientific Meeting Perth, November 2-4