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1. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The ESA Committee and several subcommittees have been busy in recent months, considering matters of finance, drug regulation, driving and conferences. Important updates of these committee activities are posted on the ESA website news.

Revised product information for several antiepileptic drugs was sent to members recently by several pharmaceutical companies, warning of increased "suicidality" with AED prescription. Following on from the ESA's published position on the issue, the ESA made a formal submission to the TGA and ADRA highlighting its concerns about the scientific data which formed the basis of the product warning and the action taken by the regulatory authorities in Australia. More information on the issue will be forthcoming.

Two new information statements were published on the ESA website this month, one on the issue of HLA testing in patients of Asian ethnicity prior to AED prescription, and one on bone health issues. In preparation are guidelines on patient safety in epilepsy monitoring units, management of epilepsy in pregnancy and advice regarding photosensitivity. If you see need for information or guidelines on other topics, or if you wish to

prepare a guideline for potential ESA endorsement, please contact the ESA secretariat.

As previously announced, the ESA has set up a research and training Foundation Fund to receive tax-deductible donations for our scientific and educational activities. Information about epilepsy research in Australia and how to donate money is on the ESA website. Members will notice an option to donate to this fund with their annual subscription this year. Please consider donating to the ESA to help support medical research and training opportunities in Australia.

Changes to the Society's database and website are planned over the next six months with the aim of moving much of the secretariat's work online. This will provide easy access for members, committees and the executive to information that they need, and hopefully reduce the Society's administrative costs. Please send any suggestions for improve-

ment to our services to the secretariat.

The Melbourne executive is now in the last six months of its three year term, so it is time to start thinking about whom next to lead the Society. Nominations for Committee membership and the Presidency will be sought in a few months time, for voting at the AGM in Perth. Please give this some thought over the next few months, and consider whether you would like to take an active role in the running of the Society. □

2. FINANCIAL MATTERS

The ESA will finish this financial year with a smaller than projected loss, due to a healthy profit from the Sydney ASM, reduced administrative costs and fewer travel scholarships awarded this year. The budget for 2009-2010 should have the Society



Epilepsy Society of Australia 24th Annual Scientific Meeting

2-4 November 2009
Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre

Now calling for abstracts. Visit the conference web page for more information:
<http://sapmea.asn.au/conventions/esa2009/>



break even for the first time in several years. □

3. MEMBERSHIP

Members will soon receive their subscription renewal notices. Subscription rates will be the same as last year: Ordinary rate \$150+GST and Special Group rate \$75+GST for trainees, students, nurses, technologists, psychologists and other allied health workers. 2009-2010 membership is required to receive discounted registration for the ASM and Master Class, and probably for access to member sections in the new website and database. As mentioned above, there will be opportunity to make a tax deductible donation to the ESA Foundation Fund. With the planned changes to the ESA database and website, next year there should be facility for online payment.

Please encourage your clinical and research colleagues who work in epilepsy-related fields to consider joining the ESA. The effectiveness of our organisation to represent clinicians and scientists working in epilepsy is strengthened by a large and diverse membership. □

4. ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING

Members will soon receive program and registration details for the Annual Scientific Meeting in Perth, from November 2-4. The invited international speakers are Dr Charles Vecht (Medical Centre The Hague, The Netherlands) and Dr Radhakrishnan (Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Trivandrum, India). Symposia on AED treatment, brain tumours and ethics are planned, along with scientific and practical sessions. The online abstract

submission system is currently open, and will close on Friday 24 July. Program, registration and other details will soon be available on the conference website:

<http://sapmea.asn.au/conventions/esa2009>

□

5. ASIA AND OCEANIA

ESA members continue to play an important role in teaching in our region. Andrew Bleasel, John Dunne, Terry O'Brien and Simon Harvey participated in the ASNA Meeting, ASEPA EEG Course and ASEPA EEG exam in Kuala Lumpur in April. Several ASEPA EEG workshops are planned in Asia for the second half of the year. Members wishing to get involved with such teaching should contact Andrew Bleasel.

John Dunne was recently elected to the ILAE Commission on Asian and Oceanian Affairs, and will fulfil the role of Secretary. John joins Andrew Bleasel, Secretary of the Asian Epilepsy Academy (ASEPA), in representing Australia and our region in international matters relating to epilepsy care, training and research. The other members of the new ILAE CAO are Byung-in Lee (Chair), Shih Hui Lim (Immediate Past-Chair), Chong Tin Tan (Past-Chair), Sunao Kaneko, Shichuo Li and Jin-Jane Tsai. The ESA thanks David Reutens for representing Australia in this role for the last four years.

Program planning continues for the 8th Asian Oceanian Epilepsy Congress, to be held in Melbourne in 21-24 October 2010. Program proposals are being considered currently by the regional and international ILAE and IBE committees. The venue is the new Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. Preliminary details, including important dates and a brief program

outline are available on the AOEC website at

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

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6. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

The Assessing Fitness to Drive Guidelines are being reviewed currently by the ANZAN/ESA Driving Subcommittee. This review is separate to the consideration of the certification process and the issue of mandatory reporting, which have occupied the subcommittee for the last couple of years. Please forward any comments on the AFTD guidelines to Ernie Somerville.

The ESA was recently asked to comment on the issue of epilepsy and operating heavy machinery. This was considered by the committee to be an important issue, and one that could perhaps be broadened to many vocational and recreational activities that pose different levels of risk for people with epilepsy. Ernie Somerville and some of the Driving Subcommittee members would be interested in tackling these questions with a group of other interested members. Please contact me if you have interest in contributing to this discussion. □

7. AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications close on June 30 for the 2010 UCB Pharma Clinical Scholarship, an annual scholarship to support a young physician undertaking specialised training in epilepsy. The scholarship, valued at approximately \$50,000 to the recipient, is tenable at any Australian teaching hospital for a maximum of 12 months. For

application details for this scholarship and other awards and scholarships, please visit

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

The next scholarship deadline is on August 31, for the Molly McDonnell Foundation Scholarship. See above link for details. □

8. OTHER NEWS

Many ESA members are off to Budapest next week to participate in the International Epilepsy Congress, celebrating the centenary of the ILAE. Speakers and program organisers include Sam Berkovic, Mark Cook, Simon Harvey, Terry O'Brien, Ingrid Scheffer, Alexandra Martiniuk and Graeme Jackson.

At the Budapest IEC, Ernie Somerville will be presented with an IBE-ILAE Epilepsy Ambassador Award. The Award recognises Ernie's significant contributions in the field of epilepsy care, teaching and training in Australia, East Timor

and SE Asia. Congratulations Ernie on this well deserved recognition.

ESA members were saddened to learn of the passing of Dr Elizabeth Fagan this month. Liz was a distinguished child neurologist and long-standing ESA member who will be sadly missed by her colleagues and friends around Australia. □

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

August 30 – September 4

14th World Congress of Neurological Surgery of the World Federation of Neurological Societies
Boston, USA

September 6-13

3rd Eilat International Educational Course: Pharmacological Treatment of Epilepsy
Eilat, Israel

October 4-7

13th ANZAN Clinical Neurophysiology Workshop
Southport, Queensland

October 14-17

Child Neurology Society 28th Annual Scientific Meeting
Louisville, USA

October 17-21

Neuroscience 2009
Chicago, USA

October 24-30

19th World Congress of Neurology
Bangkok, Thailand

November 2-4

24th ASM of the Epilepsy Society of Australia
Perth

November 12-15

3rd Beijing International Epilepsy Forum
Beijing, China

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

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



ESA Foundation Fund
Supporting Australian research into the causes and treatments of epilepsy

The ESA has formed a Foundation Fund with ATO Deductible Gift Recipient status to allow receipt of donations to support epilepsy research. To find out more, visit <http://www.epilepsy-society.org.au/pages/research.php>