

THE VASCULAR SURGICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

MINUTES OF THE 37th ANNUAL GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING ON 21 NOVEMBER 2002 AT THE WATERFRONT HALL, BELFAST

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mr F Eastcott, Mr R Hall, Mr G Layer, Mr S Jones, Mr D Macpherson, Mr S Rose, Professor H van Urk, and Mr D Wilkins.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual General Business Meeting on 8 November 2001 were approved as a correct record.

3. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The President referred Members to his report in the Yearbook in which he had summarised the activities of Council during the past year. He drew Members' attention to the following issues:

(i) Provision of Vascular Services

The President reminded Members that the document on the Provision of Vascular Services was currently being redrafted by a Working Group led by Mr P Lamont. This would involve a consultative process with the Membership, and also included input from the Departments of Health of England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Eire.

(ii) Professional Standards Committee

Members were advised that a Professional Standards Committee was now fully established, chaired by Professor W B Campbell.

(iii) Annual Meetings

The President indicated that the vascular component at the ASGBI AGM in Dublin, focusing on renal artery and carotid disease, had been successful.

A successful first meeting of the Endovascular Forum had also taken place during the year, under the joint auspices of the VSSGBI and BSIR.

(iv) British Vascular Foundation

The President recognised the work of the British Vascular Foundation(BVF) and its work in raising the profile of vascular disease and research. He advised that negotiations were currently taking place with the British Vascular Foundation to establish closer ties with the Society, led by Professor K Burnand and Professor M Horrocks.

Professor Burnand stated that the BVF was looking to the VSSGBI to take over responsibility for its activities, as it was proving difficult to continue in its present form. Council had discussed this and had agreed that a dialogue should continue with the BVF with a view to taking on responsibility for it, providing the financial arrangements were clear.

Mr R Baird welcomed this stance as fund-raising. Mr A May echoed this, stating that one of the reasons the BVF was experiencing difficulty was its lack of clear association and ownership with the VSSGBI. He believed that a closer relationship would be a positive step for both organisations. Other Members supported this view, acknowledging that a professional fund-raiser would be required, together with commitment from some Members of the Society.

Professor M Horrocks explained that the BVF would no longer be a separate charity if it became part of the VSSGBI. Its current financial position showed that approximately £50-60,000 could be available to the VSSGBI. Professor Horrocks believed it was a good opportunity for the VSSGBI to become responsible for the BVF, but it should also retain the right to cease its association if it became unsuccessful. Mr R Galland stated that the BVF's finances implied that only £25,000 had been used for research grants over the past five years. In addition, the 'float' of £50-60,000 which was available to the VSSGBI should be seen in context particularly as funding would be required to support administrative and office costs. He felt that the Society could afford to take on the BVF as its fund-raising arm for 12 months, but this arrangement would need careful review.

The majority of the Membership were in favour of the proposal to establish closer ties with the BVF, and it was agreed that Council representatives would continue discussions.

4. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Honorary Secretary reported that the Membership of the Society had increased to 668, comprising:

Ordinary	438	Affiliate	90	Associate	9
Senior	90	Overseas	24	Honorary	14

Members were encouraged to complete the questionnaire on the future of the Society's AGMs.

The Honorary Secretary acknowledged the support of the trade at the AGM, and thanked the Major Sponsors for their support during the past year.

The Honorary Secretary referred to the withdrawal of an abstract from the AGM. He advised that this matter had been taken very seriously by Council and action was being considered to prevent this happening in future.

5. HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

Members received a copy of the Society's accounts up to 31 August 2002. The Honorary Treasurer presented a summary of income and expenditure of the Society over the past 10 years, which showed a steady rise in expenditure. He indicated that this was likely to increase dramatically in the next few years due to administrative and office costs. In addition, Society income was variable – something which he was aiming to address through additional sponsorship, research grants and streamlining of costs within the Association of Surgeons.

The Honorary Treasurer proposed to Members an increase in subscriptions from January 2004. For Ordinary Members, he proposed that the subscription should increase to £125, and, for Affiliates, £60. He reminded Members that all subscriptions should be paid by Direct Debit. Furthermore, Mr Galland stated that the profits from the Society's AGMs needed to be stabilised, and future budgets would be set to make at least £50,000 profit.

The proposal to increase subscriptions was approved by Members.

6. AUDIT AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Mr S Ashley indicated that 6,000 index procedures were now entered onto the National Vascular Database, with over 190 vascular surgeons contributing data. The third NVD report would be published in the Spring. Mr Ashley urged those vascular surgeons not yet contributing to the NVD to do so, and reminded Members that it was not necessary for them to purchase the Dendrite system. Consideration was currently being given to a mechanism for verifying the data collected. Mr J Wolfe felt that the forms requesting information for the NVD were complex and questioned some of the questions being asked. Mr Ashley acknowledged these concerns but stated that the database needed to mature and that risk models needed to be developed before any fields were abandoned or discontinued.

Members were advised that the Audit and Research Committee were undertaking a survey on haemodialysis access surgery and requested that Members complete these questionnaires and return them to the secretariat.

7. TRAINING AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Mr J Scott reported that a joint appointment between the VSSGBI and the RCS(Eng) for a Vascular Tutor had been made and formally recommended to the RCS(Eng). The successful candidate was Mr S Macsweeney.

Mr Scott stated that the Educational Masterclass held the previous day was successful and had been well attended.

The Training and Education Committee had been pursuing the issue of competency assessment during the year. In addition, the Committee had fed into discussions being held at the RCS(Eng) regarding competency and the curriculum for education and training for registrars.

8. VASCULAR ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

The President referred to his report in the Yearbook on the Vascular Advisory Committee. He expressed his appreciation to the Society's Vascular Advisors whose views were crucial to Council deliberations.

9. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Honorary Secretary reported that the Professional Standards Committee had been established at the wish of Council in response to a number of concerns about how the Society should deal with rapid response visits; medico-legal claims; and the governance of the National Vascular Database. Its principal aim was to assist and support Members with medico-legal issues and, to that end, an item would be included in the next Society Newsletter requesting information from Members who had been involved in such issues.

The Committee would select and approach Members of the Society who might undertake rapid response visits where necessary. The Committee would also liaise with Royal Colleges, the National Patient Safety Agency, and the National Clinical Assessment Authority. The Honorary Secretary stated that he would shortly be meeting with Mr B Keogh of the Society of Cardiothoracic Surgeons to discuss governance issues relating to the National Vascular Database.

The Professional Standards Committee had considered correspondence from Mr J Michaels about results from a study which showed variable outcomes of AAA surgery. The Committee had also considered the recent report in the Times and the publication of data by Dr Foster

which concentrated particularly on the variation in outcomes of abdominal aortic aneurysm surgery. The Honorary Secretary explained that he had been sent data by Dr Foster – combined elective and emergency data over five years. These data had been separated after discussion into elective and emergency operations which showed that three hospitals had data outside the SMR which did not cross unity. However, two other hospitals had been reported as having high mortalities outside the normal range. The Honorary Secretary had given a response to Dr Foster stating that the Society was committed to audit and collect its own data through the National Vascular Database, but this statement was not published.

Mr P Harris, whose Hospital Trust was one of those named by Dr Foster as having data outside the norm, expressed concern that the Society had not provided an adequate response to the article in the Times. He stated that the figures used were grossly inaccurate and he had written to the Times that they should not have been used as they were misleading to the public. He was disappointed that the Society had been consulted on the figures and had not provided a more robust response which disowned the figures. He felt that by colluding with the Times this had given the data a certain validity.

The Honorary Secretary responded that the information published in the Times did not imply that the Society had colluded in producing the figures; indeed, he had advised the Times that the particular Hospital Trust should not have been singled out.

The President unreservedly rejected Mr Harris' allegation of collusion by anyone in the Society and regarded his comments as both intemperate and unfair. He himself had only become aware of this impending publication at the weekend and the Honorary Secretary had made great efforts to improve the presentation of Dr Foster's data, which one had to recognise, inaccurate as they may have been, had been obtained from individual Trust records. Furthermore, in spite of other pressing matters on the agenda, this issue had been debated at length by the Society's Committees and the consensus was that it would be inappropriate for the Society to respond. Sir Peter Morris echoed this, believing that any response from the Society would not achieve anything positive. He hoped that the publication of these figures would encourage a more concerted effort to obtain good data on surgical procedures.

10. ELECTION OF OFFICERS: RESULT OF BALLOT FOR ORDINARY MEMBERS

The successful candidates in the ballot for election to Council for 2002-2005 were as follows:

Mr D Berridge

Mr A Davies

Professor C Shearman

The Honorary Secretary thanked the retiring members of Council: Mr M Aldoori and Mr I Lane. It was noted that the remaining retiring member of Council, Mr S Ashley, would remain as Chairman of the Audit and Research Committee. The Honorary Secretary also took the opportunity to thank Mr I Franklin, the Affiliate representative on Council, whose term of office ended, and Mr N Cheshire, the retiring Vascular Tutor.

11. HONORARY MEMBER

Professor R Greenhalgh gave a citation in which he proposed Professor W Paaske as an Honorary Member of the Society. Professor Paaske thanked the Society for this honour.

12. AGM 2003: GLASGOW

Professor K Burnand advised Members that the AGM in 2003 would be held at the SECC in Glasgow from November 26-28. He stressed the importance of Members completing the questionnaire on the future of AGMs which would help shape the format of this meeting. He

also hoped to encourage many European colleagues to attend. Professor Burnand stated that the Society Dinner would be held at the Bute Hall, University of Glasgow on Thursday 27 November, at which Mr P Taylor would play the piano.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Professor Burnand, on behalf of the Membership, thanked the President and the Honorary Secretary for their work for the Society. The President echoed thanks to the Honorary Secretary who had worked tirelessly and diligently over the past four years, and who had provided great support and service to the Society. The Honorary Secretary thanked Members for the privilege of being Honorary Secretary, and thanked the President, past and present Members of Council, together with the Society's secretariat, particularly Miss J Robey, for their support.

Mr M Dennis asked that Council consider aligning Vascular Advisors more closely with Strategic Health Authorities in providing grass root opinion to the Society. It was agreed to consider this during the next year.

It was suggested that the Society should adopt a view on the consultant contract, and should represent the views of its Members in the pursuit of a different contract. Professor Burnand agreed to pursue this during the next year.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 27 November at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Glasgow.