



## Spine Society of Australia first business meeting

Venue: Sofitel Hotel, Brisbane

Date / time: 18<sup>th</sup> April 2009 at 5:05pm

**1.0 Present:** Peter McCombe (president), Sears W (acting-secretary), Oatey P, Farey I, Jones N, Pullar M, Woodland P, Singer K, Vaughan R, McPhee B, Torode I, Turner P, Schofield S, Kinloch B, Seex K, Bogduk N, Hunt J, New C, Malham G, Pik J, Atkinson M, Day G, Percy M, Williamson O, Verrills P, Mitchell B, Wilde P, Inglis G, Robertson P, Ferch R, Stanford R, Giles L, Howie G, Ashman B, Loeffler A, Giblin M, Freeman B, Liddell J, Adam C, Slinger B. (40 members)

**2.0 Apologies:** Brazenor G, Carey R, Yeo J, Prof. J.Taylor.

**3.0 Minutes of previous meeting:** It was moved That the Minutes of the previous meeting be accepted as a true and accurate record of the Business Meeting held in Adelaide, April 2008

Proposed: Owen Williamson

Seconded: Ian Farey

Passed unanimously

**4.0 Business arising from previous minutes:**

**4.1 Subscriptions** – Discussion on subscriptions was postponed until following the Treasurer's Report at the following morning's 2<sup>nd</sup> Business Meeting

**4.2 Post Fellowship Education and Training (PFET):** The President, Peter McCombe reported that the Executive Committee had been actively pursuing this RACS initiative. He and the Secretary, Graeme Brazenor had met with representatives of the NSA and AOA at the College Headquarters in Melbourne and again by a teleconference, the week prior to this AGM. Progress has been slow. The NSA has indicated support for cross-specialty post-fellowship training at last week's teleconference. The AOA has supported the PFET initiative and has also indicated their desire for the SSA to help with pre-fellowship education and training of Orthopaedic advanced trainees. In return, the AOA have agreed to examine the possibility of providing administrative support to the SSA's secretary and treasurer (book-keeping/accounting assistance) through their office in Macquarie St, Sydney. Payment for this

AOA assistance is anticipated to be part in cash and part by payment in kind for education and training. There was no discussion at this stage but the issue of the AOA providing administrative support was discussed during the second Business meeting - see President's and Treasurer's reports.

## 5.0 Reports from committees

**5.1 Rules Committee** – The President noted that the Chairman of the Rules Committee, Peter Turner had resigned and that he wished to thank him for the excellent job he had done.

**5.2 Scientific Program Committee:** Members were referred to the report of the Chair of the Scientific Program Committee, Owen Williamson which may be found in the 2009 ASM Program book. In speaking to his report, Dr Williamson thanked his co-reviewers, Drs Mark Percy, Ralph Stanford and Michelle Sterling. He commented that the quality of abstracts received this year continued to improve on previous years' and few now required modification. He noted that there has been a delay in publication of abstracts by the JBJS(Br) due to a shortage of JBJS Editorial staff. He understands that this situation has now been addressed. The President spoke of the improvement in the quality of the Society ASM's over the past three years and offered a 'tremendous vote of thanks' to Dr Williamson and his team. This was carried by acclamation.

**5.3 Site Committee:** The President noted that there is presently no Chairman of the Site Committee. Accordingly, the Executive had decided to appoint Dr Greg Malham as chairman. Dr Malham then addressed the meeting. He reminded members that the venue for 2010 would be Christchurch from Friday 9<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April, prior to the 2010 ISSLS meeting, which is to be held in Auckland from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of April. He also spoke regarding the Executive's advice to the AGM last year not to rotate meetings to 'more remote venues' more often than every 3 years, in order to help with travel costs to members and industry.

**5.3.1** Subsequent to last years AGM discussion, Dr Malham proposed:

Motion: **That the 2011 SSA ASM be held in Melbourne**

Proposed: Greg Malham

Seonded: Graeme Brazenor

This motion lay on the table until the Second Business Meeting

**5.3.2 Venue for 2012.** Sydney was proposed following discussion in which the Gold Coast or Canberra were considered as possible alternatives

**5.4 Membership Committee:** Kevin Singer addressed the meeting. There were seven applications for membership. All fulfilled the criteria for membership. The following were proposed for membership:

Active membership: **Ashish Diwan, Patrick Chan, Andrew Fagan, Paul Hodges, Robert Kuru, Richard Parkinson and Michele Sterling**

Associate membership: ???

## **6.0 Reports from subcommittees**

**6.1 DePuy Spinal Fellowship:** The Treasurer reported that all five fellowships had been awarded during the previous year. He had had discussions that day with Mr Brett Spence of De Puy, who had indicated De Puy's ongoing support. The Treasurer spoke to Mr Spence about arranging allocation of Fellowships within financial years to help with our SSA administration. De Puy presently works on a Calendar year but are happy to try to arrange a compromise arrangement.

**6.2** The Executive had agreed during the year to receiving payment from **Medtronic** for the purpose of allocating an \$80,000 fellowship grant to Dr Gerald Quan to work in France.

## **7.0 Spinal Research award (sponsored by Medtronic),** determined at end of meeting:

Won by Ranganathan Arun, Brian Freeman, Brigette Scammell, Donal McNally and Penny Gowland, for a manuscript entitled, "What influence dose sustained mechanical load have on diffusion in the human intervertebral disc? An in-vivo study using serial post-contrast magnetic resonance imaging."

## **8.0 Rob Johnston Award (sponsored by the Rob Johnston Trust and the Spine Society of Australia),** determined at end of meeting

Won by Matthew Shaw, for a paper entitled "i-Cobb – an innovative technique in spinal radiographic measurement." Co Authors: Marie Izatt, Clayton Adam, Paul Licina & Geoffrey Askin.

## **9.0 Best Presentation Award (sponsored by Medtronic),** determined at end of meeting:

Won by Michele Sterling, Joan Hendrikz & Justin Kenardy, for a paper entitled, "Developmental trajectories of pain and disability and post-traumatic stress symptoms following whiplash injury."

**10.0 Best Poster Award (sponsored by Orthotech),** determined at end of meeting:

Won by Alexander Gibson, Satyen Mehta, Ben Goss & Richard Williams, for a poster entitled, "Significance of the inverted radial reflex in asymptomatic subjects."

**11.0 Election of nominating committee**

In the absence from the meeting this year of the immediate past President, Roy Carey, the Executive had appointed the previous past President, Ian Farey to chair the nominating committee.

Ian Farey proposed as the other two members of the nominating committee for 2009:

Peter Robertson and Peter Wilde

Seconded by Kevin Singer – Passed unanimously.

Dr Farey indicated that nominations would be required for:

- Chairman of the Scientific Program Committee (also referred to in SSA Rules as Editorial Secretary)
- Member of the Membership Committee to replace Kevin Singer.

**12.0 Correspondence:** The President indicated that he did not believe there was any relevant correspondence to bring to the attention of the meeting other than that incorporated in other items of the Agenda

**13.0 New Business:**

**13.1 Spine Society co-ordination of re-application to MSAC re Cervical Disc Arthroplasty:** The President opened discussion by speaking about the decision which the Society faced regarding whether or not it was to remain a small society which focused on running an annual scientific meeting or whether it was to take on other issues, which appeared at this stage to be largely related to surgery – for example, the Society's potential role in the introduction to Australia of new technology and procedures.

The President reported the huge amount of work, which had been done in the course of preparing an MSAC submission on cervical disc arthroplasty, including meetings and discussions with Government and Industry. Legal advice had been sought by the Executive and indicated that the Society is entitled under its current Constitution to undertake MSAC submissions. Advice obtained from MSAC itself was that they would like and it had been their intention that professional bodies such as the SSA would prepare submissions.

The President reported that the cervical arthroplasty document, which has been prepared, is now up to 140 pages and that difficulty had been encountered in the preparation of the economic evaluation section. He and the secretary, Graeme Brazenor had met with industry and they had agreed to fund a disinterested 3<sup>rd</sup> party to complete this. Once finished and prior to submission to MSAC, the Executive intends to review the document and in particular, whether it is an appropriate product of a Professional Body such as the SSA. The President, Dr McCombe and Dr Sears would not take part in any Executive vote due to potential conflicts of interest.

Nik Bogduk suggested that the document be passed around interested members of the Society for comment, prior to submission. The President suggested posting the document on the Society website for two weeks for this purpose.

Discussion was held regarding the economic evaluation and ways to help this.

Ian Farey spoke in support of the Executive's actions to date, stating that there was a need for the Society to show Government that it should be involved in these decisions.

Bruce Kinloch asked about budgeting for this process and the President replied that industry had undertaken to fund the process.

**13.2 RACS Digital Imaging Working Party:** The President spoke to progress on this issue and the development of an Australian Digital Imaging Corporation, which he said was a 'complete shambles'. A consensus statement had however been issued by the RACS Digital Imaging Working Party in which there was one positive development - a protocol for a localising scout view on scans. This had been subsequently improved on by the College of Radiology. Definitions will be developed for diagnostic quality images. The final product will be co-badged by the College of Radiology, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the Spine Society of Australia. Radiologists will hopefully have to comply with this.

There was no discussion.

**13.3 Reform of the Rules (Constitution) of the Spine Society of Australia:** The President asked Dr Kevin Singer to speak to this matter. Dr Singer had been asked by the Executive to oversee review of the Society's Constitution. Dr Singer explained that the current Constitution is dated 1999 and is in need of review. To this end, he had consulted with Professor Robert Fraser who had been responsible for drafting

the original constitution and with a lawyer, Adjunct Professor John G Kelly of John G Kelly & Associates Pty Limited who is an expert in medical society constitutional law. In particular, he had sought Mr Kelly's opinion regarding the compliance of the current constitution with current law. Dr Singer said that any changes to the Constitution would be made very carefully and that proposed changes would be posted on the Society website for member's comments and that further documents would be circulated later in the year and prior to being put to next year's AGM in Christchurch.

The President then explained that while Constitutional review should be undertaken by societies every 5-7 years, the Executive felt that there may be a need constitutional change, given the potential evolving roles of the Society. The Executive was mindful that such a process must be undertaken carefully and would require inclusive discussion and debate. He indicated that there were several major issues to be examined:

1. The make-up of the Executive
2. The question of separate membership categories or the development of a separate organization within the Society of just surgeons
3. The increased workload of the society and its honorary office bearers and their staff

In speaking to the second of these, the President explained that there was a likelihood of increased Society interaction with organisations such as the RACS, especially over the Society's role in surgical education and training. The RACS has indicated that it cannot formally talk to us at present because our membership is not solely surgeons. He said that any change in the constitution must not interfere with the rights of non-surgeons and should include benefits for them.

In speaking to the second issue, the President expressed the view that the current situation, which involved the use of Society office-bearers secretaries at considerable personal expense, was unsustainable and that the activities of the society must therefore either contract or the outsourcing of book-keeping and secretarial services would be necessary. Outsourcing would have implications for membership fees.

Nik Bogduk suggested establishing a Board of Spine Surgery & Training, linked to the Society but with separate political and political purposes.

The President agreed that one of the options would be to create another entity, either part of or separate from the SSA and which could share the resources of the SSA, from within or without. He felt the preferred option would be that which required the

least change in the constitution – possibly a section of the SSA which shared the same executive.

Mark Percy expressed the view that the issue is a philosophical one regarding 'what the SSA is'. He suggested that the SSA might incorporate a Surgical SSA.

Charles New said that MOA's could be created with other organisations. He explained reasons behind the formation of ASOS (the Australian Society of Orthopaedic Surgeons) as the political arm of the Orthopaedic surgeons and commended this type of co-operative development. He said the tax implications of the Society taking on a political role would need to be watched carefully.

Ian Farey said he favoured the formation of a separate organisation within the SSA, possibly with a separate fee. He added that the SSA should be the body to advance spinal surgery within Australia.

Nik Bogduk expressed the view that the 'thrusts and precepts' of the current constitution should be preserved with minimalist interference.

Ian Torode commented that government doesn't like dealing with educational bodies and that it may be necessary to create a craft group.

The President expressed the view that he felt the society would be able to undertake expanded functions from a legal standpoint, although he had not previously considered the tax implications, which would have to be looked at. He felt the main question for the membership was a moral one as to whether these functions should be undertaken.

Bruce McPhee stated that he did not believe MSAC applications are outside of the SSA domain because they do not concern fees. Argument over fees however, should not be an SSA concern.

Bill Sears commented that certain MSAC applications such as those relating to procedures, which did not involve new prostheses such as pedicle subtraction osteotomy or intraoperative neuro monitoring would require discussion of fees in the required economic analysis.

John Liddell commented that the NSA was not able to talk about fees under its constitution and Nigel Jones added that the NSA had a separate Forum, which handled such matters.

The President sought opinions regarding a possible motion to be put to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Business meeting regarding how this matter might be carried forwards.

Nik Bogduk suggested: "That the Executive take steps to explore the feasibility of establishing a separate chapter of spine surgery within the SSA organisation but subject to legal or tax implications, it may need to become a separate organisation"

Finally, the President spoke to the meeting regarding an Executive meeting, which had been held in Canberra to discuss constitutional reform and the Think Tank with industry representatives on the process of assessment of new surgical technology in Australia. He explained that under the terms of the Think Tank, the details of the meeting were confidential. It had however been financially supported by the industry and had been cost neutral to the society.

**The meeting closed at: 18:20**