

News from the WFSA

The Obstetric Anaesthesia Committee

The past year for the Obstetric Committee has been one of forging links with sister organizations and attempting to build the bridges by which we may collaborate on future multidisciplinary projects.

Late in 2009, following an earlier introductory meeting in London, the Chairman, Dr Paul Howell, travelled to Cape Town as guest of FIGO (the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics) to participate in their World Congress. There he joined round-table panel discussions devoted to the FIGO initiative on Maternal and Newborn Health supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He made clear to parties, who habitually forget to include anaesthetic involvement in the planning of maternity projects (e.g. obstetricians, midwives, health planners), how pivotal we are in improving obstetric surgical outcome in resource poor areas.

The WFSA has now become a Partner in the World Health Organization Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), a multidisciplinary alliance of interested parties who are working to improve the health of mothers and children worldwide. This will hopefully improve our international profile and our ability to liaise with like-minded organizations on joint future projects – all too pressing since it's now clear that Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 are far from being met.

Links with the Obstetric Anaesthetists' Association (OAA) and the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland (AAGBI) continue to grow, and the WFSA has joined forces with them on several interesting ventures. Thanks to a generous grant from Baxter, and collaboration with the OAA and Elsevier, publishers of the *International Journal of Obstetric Anesthesia* (IJOA), a two CD set of useful obstetric anaesthetic resource material is being produced for distribution in resource-poor countries. This set, which comprises a variety of different tools including a webcast of the 2008 OAA Three Day Course with slides and abstract book, video of how spinals work, and back copies of *IJOA*, *Update in Anaesthesia* and *Tutorial of the Week*, is almost ready for circulation through usual WFSA routes.

In addition, in collaboration with the Publications Committee, the OAA and the AAGBI, an exciting new handbook of obstetric anaesthesia, specifically targeted at anaesthetic providers in resource-poor area, has just been completed, and is ready for shipping. Already in hardcopy, it is hoped to make it available in electronic format at some point in the future.

As and when these two new educational tools are received, please do feed back to us with your comments, including what is useful, what is not, and what else would you like included (for the next editions)!

Around the world, individual members of the Obstetric Anaesthesia Committee continue to make significant contributions to the practice of obstetric anaesthesia and analgesia in their own regions, and beyond. Everyone plays their part, but special mention should perhaps be made of Dr Medge Owen who heads Kybele, an organisation that takes

multidisciplinary teams into transitional level countries and shows how obstetric (anaesthetic) care can be improved through a combination of formal lectures and hands-on practical tuition. Recent publications show that this approach can make a lasting impact, with sustained changes in practice – an excellent example to us all!^{1,2}

Finally, in the not too far distant future, our next World Congress in Argentina in 2012 approaches. There will, of course, be an obstetric anaesthetic component to the meeting – always popular sessions – so put the dates in your diary, and see you there!

Paul Howell

Chairman

Obstetric Anaesthesia Committee WFSA

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