

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Paediatric Neurology Association

Held at the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh
On 17 January 2007

1. Minutes

The minutes of the 2006 Annual General Meeting were approved.

2. Matters Arising

Nil.

3. Election of President and Notification of New Members of Council

Mike Pike explained that, as a consequence of printing problems, the period between members receiving ballots for the election of President and the deadline for the receipt of returned ballots was only a matter of a few days. The constitution currently states that ballots must be received by 1 December. A substantial number of ballots had been received shortly after this date. None of the ballots had been opened, but following discussions in the Executive and at Council, and also with the 2 candidates, a proposal was put that all ballots returned should be counted. The alternative position would be that those returned prior to the deadline would be counted and all others destroyed unopened. There was unanimous support for the proposal that all ballots be counted. Following this, Philippa Rodie and Richard Newton counted the ballots. Helen Cross secured a clear majority and was declared duly elected as the next President of the Association.

Mike Pike then thanked the outgoing Immediate Past President (Colin Kennedy), the outgoing Secretary (Colin Ferrie) and the outgoing Assistant Secretary (Robert McWilliam) for their hard work on behalf of the Association. He explained that there was only one candidate for the post of Secretary, this being Philip Jardine, and one candidate for the post of Assistant Secretary, this being Sunny Philip, who were therefore elected unopposed.

The AGM was informed that, in addition to these, Alasdair Parker would be serving a second term as the Deanery Advisor for Cambridge, whilst Chris Rittey (Trent) was being replaced by Santosh Mordekar, Pam Tomlin (North West) was being replaced by Imelda Hughes, Martin Kirkpatrick (Scotland) was being replaced by Sameer Zuberi and Anita Devlin (Newcastle) was being replaced by Ki Pang. Following the election of Sunny Philip to Assistant Secretary, Raj Gupta will be taking over as Deanery Advisor in the West Midlands. Finally, John Livingston has been co-opted onto Council as the organiser for the 2008 Annual Meeting.

4. President's Report

Contract with RCPCH and Insurance Indemnity

The President explained that the RCPCH now required sub-specialty groups like the BPNA to sign a contract with them specifying the relationship between the group and the College. At the same time, the RCPCH has recommended that sub-specialty groups consider obtaining insurance indemnity. The President and the Executive have been working on this, although the process is becoming increasingly complicated in that the quotations obtained, whilst not particularly expensive, do not cover the Association for significant areas of its work. The issue is being pursued.

As a corollary, the Executive and Council had felt it would be appropriate for groups within the BPNA (such as the Epilepsy Interest Group and possibly the Muscle Interest Group) to formalise their relationship with the BPNA and this issue is being pursued as well.

Neurology Representation on the Academic CSAC

The President informed the meeting that there is now an academic CSAC and this has asked for a representative from the neurology CSAC to be a link person. Following discussions in the Executive and at Council, it had been agreed that Robert Forsyth (the National Training Advisor) will undertake this.

Contract/Work Load Issues

The RCPCH has asked the BPNA to give an opinion as to what a reasonable on-call rota for Consultant Paediatric Neurologists should be. The President has replied on behalf of the Association that a 1 in 4 is just about acceptable, whilst a 1 in 5 would be preferable. He also stressed that there should be a pro-rata reduction in the on-call commitment for those with academic appointments and in large centres with heavier work-load.

Links with other organisations

Joint Neurosciences Council (JNC)

One or more members of the Executive continue to attend meetings of the Joint Neurosciences Council although it is relatively infrequent when particular issues of concern to paediatric neurology are discussed. The BPNA has suggested that paediatric "interests" are under-represented on the JNC and have recommended to its officers that the British Academy of Childhood Disability and the British Paediatric Neurosurgical Group should be invited on to it. This was to be discussed at the January JNC meeting

Brain Centre

The Brain Centre was unable to raise sufficient funds to secure a deposit on a building which they had identified as suitable. Consequently, the main drivers of the project were re-thinking their strategy.

Clinical Excellence Award

The President explained that the new standing committee charged with making recommendations on behalf of the BPNA for the award of bronze and silver/gold awards, met for the first time this year. The committee is composed of the President, the President Elect or the Immediate Past President and the National Training Advisor, along with 2 Deanery Advisors who are elected annually by the other Deanery Advisors. In addition, there is a lay representative, currently Linda Lazenby of the Roahl Dahl Foundation. The committee considers applications using the criteria published by the RCPCH. The President then explained that John Livingston had written to him, urging greater transparency in the process and, in particular, publication of the recommendations made by the committee. This has been considered by both the Executive and the Council. Full disclosure as suggested was felt inappropriate, as it was felt it might be intimidating for many members of the Association to have their ranking against their peers a matter of public knowledge. However, it was felt appropriate that, with the approval of the AGM, individuals who had applied for support from the Association, should at their request to the Chair of the standing committee, be given their ranking but not the ranking of any others. This proposal was accepted unanimously.

Mac Keith Prize

The MacKeith Prize Committee chaired by Elaine Hicks considered the 2 applicants for the MacKeith prize this year and, given the high standard of both candidates, had recommended that the prize be awarded jointly to Dr Richard Chin and Dr Robert McFarland.

PET Courses

A number of PET1 and PET2 courses have been held over the year with excellent feedback. In addition, the first PET3 course was held in Edinburgh and was also considered a great success. The courses are generating considerable income for the Association.

Previously it had been agreed that the profits made from the PET1 and PET2 courses would be shared, on an annual basis, between all those centres running courses that year and the BPNA, according to a formula agreed at the Council meeting in June 2006 [that the first £500 profit for each PET2 course and the first £300 profit for each PET1 course should go to the BPNA. Any further profits to be shared on an annual basis with half being retained by the BPNA and the other half being divided between all centres running courses that year. This allocation and distribution to be supervised the Executive. Given the sums of money involved, it had been felt, both by the Executive and the Council, that it was appropriate in addition to impose a maximum ceiling of £1,000 per course per year per centre, and that any profit due to a host centre in excess of £1,000 should also be retained by the Association. This was accepted by the meeting.

Strategic Development of the BPNA

The President explained that during the last year he, along with the Executive and the Council, had been considering the future strategic development of the BPNA. It was felt that the Association should now develop the infrastructure to allow it to support national collaborative studies in areas of importance to paediatric neurology. He explained how an *ad hoc* meeting in the autumn had considered this further and the view which emerged was that the BPNA should consider fund raising in order to develop facilities and support, such as data management, IT, statistics etc. The President explained that if this was to be taken forward, the likelihood is that the next steps will be establishment of charitable status, the development of a plan for fundraising and the formation of a small working group to lead the project. He invited views from the floor. Chris Verity (Chairman of the Academic Board of the RCPCH) noted that the College (led by Neil McIntosh) is involved in something similar and he stressed the need to avoid duplication. Mike Pike thanked him for this and indicated that he would explore it with Neil McIntosh.

Brian Neville felt the idea was sound. However, in order to raise money, he stressed the need for a good project which had undergone appropriate peer review. Frank Besag was also supportive but felt further clarification as to what was being proposed was required. Peta Sharples asked if the idea is that the BPNA will provide financial support for projects and whether it is proposed that there will be a physical structure somewhere. In reply to the latter question, Mike Pike explained that, at least initially, he felt the developments would lead to the establishment of a virtual organisation.

Finbar O'Callaghan asked what the relationship would be with the Medicines for Children Research Network. Mike Pike explained that the degree of overlap was probably less than might be envisaged, since the Medicines for Children Research Network is principally driven by the needs of the pharmaceutical industry. John Osborne pointed out that the Medicines for Children Research Network does not cover the whole country, whereas what is being envisaged by the BPNA does. He noted that the UKCCSG makes a levy on each of its centres and that this provides a significant part of its funding. Anita Devlin suggested that it might be worth piloting the proposal, at least initially.

Mike Pike drew the discussion to a close by asking the asking the AGM if, in principle, it supported the concept and wished him, the Executive and the Council to explore it further. There was a unanimous vote in favour.

Secretariat

The President explained how the work of the organisation has increased very considerably in recent years, particularly in terms of Distance Learning and PET courses. Consequently, Philippa Rodie, the Executive Manager, is working more hours than she is currently paid for. In addition, she employs 2 friends on an *ad hoc* basis to help out when particularly busy. Clearly, this situation cannot last and, following lengthy discussions in the Executive and Council, it has been recommended that Philippa Rodie is offered a full time contract and that 2 additional part-time workers are employed, one to do 4 hours, 4 days per week, concentrating on the PET courses, and the other doing 5 hours per week, concentrating on Distance Learning. It has been recommended that they should be offered 2-year fixed term contracts. Additionally, the Secretariat office requires some further pieces of equipment, including a laptop and a photocopier. The Secretariat currently requires extra help and advice to see it through this period of rapid expansion and Richard Newton has kindly offered to act as a 'Transition Facilitator'. Following discussions, it has been recommended that he be asked to do so for the next 2 years, to report to the Treasurer and to be co-opted onto Council for this purpose. The membership supported all of this.

John Osborne asked about employee liability insurance and the President explained that this was being looked into.

Distance Learning (presented by Richard Newton)

All the Distance Learning units are now near completion and will be issued within the next 4-6 months. Applications to start the Distance Learning courses are down this year (to 4). However, the past year had seen the successful launch of the course in both Switzerland and Holland (12 and 8 students respectively). These are to act as pilots. The next step, within the next 12 months, is for the course to go web based. This will require resources and Richard Newton is preparing a business plan to be presented to Council and the Executive. It is also hoped to launch individual units (starting with epilepsy) for clinicians to use as CPD.

Anita Devlin asked about the possibility of plagiarism. Richard Newton explained that we have copyright protection, although if we wished to enforce it we would have to decide whether it was worth the cost of litigation. Chris Verity wondered whether the Epilepsy Distance Learning unit might clash with the PET courses. It was felt that they wouldn't. Shiela Puri asked whether it might be possible to make the Distance Learning course available to developing countries at substantially reduced cost. Richard Newton said that this may be possible, depending on the success of it being launched in Western Europe.

5. Immediate Past President's Report

Training Centres and PMETB

Colin Kennedy, the Immediate Past President, explained that it is not at all clear yet how PMETB wishes to inspect sub-specialty training programmes including paediatric neurology. What is clear is that a return to the visits as undertaken by the BPNA in the past will not be welcome. However, a set of generic standards have been produced by the PMETB and the RCPCH has been grafting onto these specialty standards. In turn, Colin Kennedy has been working on developing sub-specialty specific standards along the same lines and it is hoped that this will be helpful. It remains unclear as to what process will ensure these standards are being achieved. However, it is likely that this will be the responsibility of Post-Graduate Deans. Colin Kennedy is developing a check list questionnaire to be used with trainees (probably both paediatric neurology grid trainees and general paediatric trainees attached to paediatric neurology) and is hoped to pilot this at the next penultimate year assessments and next trainees meeting.

Jean-Pierre Lin noted that training today is competency based and asked whether our trainees will be assessed in this manner. Rob Forsyth indicated that this will be so. Both Chris Verity and John Osborne noted the considerable amount of work which had been put into the training

visits to paediatric neurology centres and John Osborne felt that the discontinuation of these had a lot to do with the emasculation of the profession. Adelaida Martinez emphasised that the training visits had also led to improved services.

Europe

The EPNS is continuing its 3 year cycle of training meetings, during which it is hoped to cover the breadth of the European syllabus. Two courses are planned for 2007. Details are available on the EPNS website. The EPNS is also hoping to have a few workshops on topic related themes, such as opsoclonus myoclonus syndrome. Finally, it is looking to see how it can help those working in the field of paediatric neurology in the former USSR.

6. Secretary's Report

Colin Ferrie noted that no elections to the Executive or Council would be required this year, but that the terms of office of Donncha Hanrahan (Deanery Advisor to Northern Ireland), Louise Hartley (Deanery Advisor in Wales) and Neil Thomas (Deanery Advisor in Wessex) would end at the AGM in 2008. He reminded the membership that it is hoped that replacements will emerge locally and the names passed on to the Secretary. If there is failure to reach agreement locally, the Secretary will arrange an election.

Following the difficulties which had occurred this year regarding the closing date for the election of President, the Executive and Council have advised that a slight amendment is made to the constitution. Currently paragraph 5(c) reads: *"When there is more than one candidate, a postal voting paper will be circulated in the autumn newsletter, to be returned to the Secretariat by 1 December and the result announced at the next AGM."* It is recommended that the clause *"by 1 December"* is removed. Given that this is a proposed change to the constitution, it will be announced in the spring newsletter and voted upon at the AGM in 2008.

Last year the AGM voted in favour of a proposal to make contact details of members available to outside non-profit organisations, such as other professional organisations and relevant charities, unless members specifically opted out, and to make contact details available to outside commercial organisations (for example drug companies) but only when members had specifically opted in. The AGM had asked that there should be monitoring of any problems. The system was implemented and there had been no problems. However, very few members have used the website facility to opt in, with the result that the list of members' contact details which can be made available to outside commercial organisations (for a fee) is very small. This was discussed at both the Executive and Council and a recommendation made that contact details can be made to outside commercial organisations (as felt appropriate by the Secretary and/or the Executive) unless individual members had specifically opted out. This was put to the meeting and was approved.

7. Assistant Secretary's Report.

Robert McWilliam reviewed the latest Manpower Report, the data for which was collected in the autumn of 2005. The report shows a continuing trend to increased consultant numbers and increased part-time working. There seems to be a wide disparity in the number of PAs available for paediatric neurology per head of population around the country, although the accuracy of this data is questionable. The survey also suggests the possibility that there might be an excess of those with completed CCSTs in paediatric neurology, compared to the number of jobs available in the next few years. However, the actual problem may not be as great as appears, given that not all those completing CCSTs in paediatric neurology will take up full time paediatric neurology posts in the UK. Robert McWilliam then presented details of the membership which showed an increase in the last year of 15.

Robert McWilliam presented to the AGM a list of the applicants for membership. Twelve applications for ordinary membership were received and one for overseas membership. These had been reviewed by Council and were all recommended. The AGM voted to accept all applications.

8. National Training Adviser's Report

National Grid

Robert Forsyth noted that his role as BPNA National Training Adviser is much more peripheral to the National Grid system than was previously the case. He informed members that, given the manpower projections, he now no longer considers there a need for new training posts to be created in paediatric neurology, at least for the present.

Penultimate Year Assessments

These will take place in the spring, as usual.

Competencies and Assessment Tools

A document concerning competencies in paediatric neurology has now been submitted to the RCPCH and will be "published" soon. The next step is to develop assessment tools to determine whether a trainee has reached the required competency level. PMETB wishes this to be workplace based and this has implications for the workload of educational supervisors. The RCPCH has been charged with producing an assessment instrument to assess trainees. This work is ongoing. One important issue is whether knowledge should be assessed. There is a move away from written examinations and there have been suggestions that it is no longer necessary to assess knowledge. This has not been the view of the BPNA, at least as represented to the College by Robert Forsyth. In this, there has been support from both the Executive and Council and those present at the AGM were also in support of this view. What seems most likely is that there will be some form of case based oral examination towards the end of training.

9. Treasurer's Report

Penny Fallon presented the AGM with data showing that the current assets of the Association are £238,202 with current liabilities of £70,489. Therefore, net assets are £167,711 and the net income of the Association is £30,469.

She informed the AGM that the Bristol conference made a profit of £2,525.02.

Predicted expenditure in 2006 was £30,000. Actual expenditure was £57,920. The reason for the large discrepancy related to Secretariat expenses (wages and office rental). Although the difference is very large, it is explained by the greatly increased work of the Association, particularly with regards to the PET courses.

With regards to subscriptions, in 2006 these were £160 per ordinary member. Last year the AGM was informed that it was likely that a recommendation would be made this year to increase the subscription. However, Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology has reduced its levy from £107 to £84, reflecting decreased printing costs. Consequently, the Executive and Council have recommended no change to the subscription fees for next year. This was agreed by the AGM.

10. Report of the Convener of the Governance and Audit Committee

Carlos de Sousa informed the AGM that 2 meetings of the Governance and Audit Committee were held in 2006. The work of the Committee this year will concentrate on updating various documents on the website and developing performance indicators in epilepsy. He also informed the AGM that the Governance and Audit Committee would be holding an open meeting during the Annual Meeting and this would include an update on the web forum.

11. BPNSU Report

William Whitehouse informed the AGM that the BPNSU had been running since June 2006 and there are now 2 studies listed on it. He encouraged members to register further projects, noting that the cost is £200 per project per year.

Finbar O'Callaghan is taking over from William Whitehouse as lead of the core group. There is now a vacancy for a new member of the core group (as William is leaving it). Anyone interested should contact either Finbar O'Callaghan or Carlos de Sousa.

11. Disability Report

Jane Williams informed the AGM that Karen Horridge is the new Chair of the Paediatric Neurodisability CSAC. They are currently advertising for a new Training Adviser, the closing date of which is the end of March 2007. In much the same way as the BPNA is advising the RCPCH on sub-speciality training standards, competencies and assessments, so is the Neurodisability CSAC.

12. Child Psychiatry Report

No report was received.

13. Mac Keith Press Report

Peter Baxter informed the AGM that Blackwell is now taking over from Cambridge University Press in publishing Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology and that printing costs had decreased as a consequence. He noted that 4 new books will be produced by Developmental Medicine in Child Neurology in 2007 and that the new edition of Aicardi's textbook is due out in 2008. The Mac Keith meetings continue to be very active and well attended. The citation index for Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology is currently 1.8.

14. Meetings

Leeds 2008

The annual meeting in 2008 will be held in Leeds between 16 and 18 January at the Royal Armouries. Planning is at an appropriate stage.

BPNA 2009 - Birmingham

No report.

BPNA 2010

South Wales was suggested as a suitable venue. Cathy White agreed to take this forward with colleagues in Wales.

York 2007

Sameer Zuberi informed the AGM that this year there will be a joint meeting with the Palliative Care Group and will run from 9am to 3pm.

Harrogate 2009

Helen Cross informed the AGM that the venue and the social events programme had all been booked. She was in the process of forming various sub-committees to deal with various aspects of the meeting and further details on this will be available during the year.

17. Any Other Business

- i) The AGM was informed that Tony Hockley had written to the Association concerning memorials to Stuart Green. A memorial service is to be held on 22 April, which will be open to members of the Association. Details will be circulated by e-mail. Stuart's old colleagues in Birmingham Children's Hospital are keen to establish a named lecture in his honour. Mike Pike explained that this was discussed at the Executive and Council. It was felt appropriate to have such a lecture at the Annual Meeting in Birmingham 2009, but that there was caution about having a regular annual named lecture. Alternatives which had been suggested included a regular named lecture at the Trainees' Meeting in the autumn which could be based henceforth in Birmingham, Stuart's alma mater, and the possibility also of establishing a travel fellowship to help trainees obtain experience abroad. It was noted that when Stuart was President he had been keen to establish this as the "President's Prize". These initiatives were supported by the AGM.
- ii) Frank Besag lamented his perception that recently the relationship between paediatric neurology and neuropsychiatry had been eclipsed in recent Annual Meetings. Isobel Heyman (the new Child Psychiatry Representative) sees re-establishing such links as a priority.
- iii) Charlie Fairhurst suggested that senior members of the Association should be able to attend Annual Meetings at a greatly reduced rate. Mike Pike noted that senior members over the age of 80 already attend free and that both the Executive and the Council did not feel that it was right at present to commit the surplus funds of the Association to particular areas given the increased risks inherent in the expansion of the secretariat. Penny Fallon suggested that this could be an item to discuss at the next Executive meeting and this was agreed.

18. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the AGM will be in Leeds in 2008.