BRITISH SOCIETY OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

Presidential review of the year’s activity 1992–93

Four important issues have dominated the work of your Officers and Council during the year 1992–93.

The first was our decision to bid for the 1997 meeting of the United European Gastroenterology Week to be held in Birmingham. According to the usual nature of things, we found ourselves with only three or four weeks with which to construct the bid and this entailed a series of hectic meetings of a working party of official gastroenterology advisory bodies together with the staff of the International Exhibition Centre at Birmingham. In the event, a beautiful document was produced, endorsed by the Prime Minister, and submitted for consideration. Our bid found favour and Professor Hermon Dowling has been chosen to be President of the Society during the year in which we host this very important meeting. He is already hard at work on the first stages of the organisation. Members of the BSG will be particularly pleased that the Society has been awarded this accolade in the year of its Diamond Jubilee.

The second theme concerned the relation of the Society as a central organisation with regional gastroenterological associations. There are many types of such organisations ranging from Gut Clubs to official gastroenterology advisory bodies advising regions or districts. At the time of BSG meetings, these organisations send representatives to the Clinical Services Committee, which is chaired by a member of Council. We are happy that in this way the Society has continued to be representative of the grass roots of British gastroenterology and qualified to speak therefore with authority in discussion with outside bodies such as the Department of Health. It was Dr Roger Williams who, as Chairman of the Clinical Services Committee, first put forward the suggestion that the organisation of the peripheral units should be placed on a more formal footing, with democratic elections of delegates to the centre. In this way he felt that the BSG’s position in such discussions would be strengthened as it would be more clearly perceived to be representative of the grass roots. The fact that this change is now two thirds along the road to completion owes much to Dr Williams’s enthusiasm and drive and I am sure the Society will be increasingly grateful to him as time passes.

The third theme concerned the monitoring of endoscopy training, trainees, and trainers. Despite considerable activity over the four preceding years, no satisfactory solution had been found to the problem of the nature of the organisation required to carry out this task. Without going into details (because a few Ts have yet to be crossed and Is to be dotted) it would seem that a working arrangement has emerged and it should be possible to implement this arrangement by about the end of 1993. Endoscopy, whether for diagnosis or for treatment, is such a dominant part of gastroenterology that we cannot afford any slack in the control of training arrangements.

The fourth issue was training (apart from endoscopy) of gastroenterologists. The coming changes in the numbers of juniors and consultants and the nature of their duties as foreshadowed in the Calman report are of considerable importance and perhaps concern to the Society. It is vital that the training of the juniors continues to produce consultant gastroenterologists of at least the present high standard. The statutory position is that the responsibility for these matters lies with the appropriate Specialist Advisory Committees. The need to ensure, however, that gastroenterological members of the committee have the fullest possible information and support from us has led to the formation by Council of a new committee, the Training Committee, by splitting the old Education and Training Committee into its two component parts. This committee will be concerned with the whole of gastroenterology but to avoid duplication the surgical strain will by arrangement be taken by the Training Committee of the Association of Surgeons. The fullest possible liaison will be maintained through the Chairman of our Regional Section.

My year has been busy yet rewarding, and leaves me feeling very conscious of the honour of having been President. I record my gratitude to the Officers and Council and to the administrative staff for all their hard work and loyalty.

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