

# Association of British Neurologists Spring Scientific Meeting

Brighton, UK, 19-21 April, 2006.

Renowned for its busy beachfront with nostalgic Victorian piers, brazen fairgrounds and rides, a feverish night-life with a diverse gay scene and termed by many as a 'pleasure dome', Brighton was none other than host to the ABNs spring scientific meeting.

With a backdrop of fairy lights and to the faint bark of sea-gulls, opening its doors to delegates was the luxury five star promenade hotel, The Grand. Some may have been reminded of the hotel's turbulent past, involving eminent female politicians, party political conferences and terrorist acts.

Delegates gathered and eagerly awaited the opening platform presentations of the top scoring papers from Hirst, Fulton and Anderson, while trainers and educationalists met for an interactive and multi-media session with Professor CM Wiles and Dr GN Fuller. Focusing on development of teaching, appraisal and assessment, highlighting the use of multi-source feedback and MiniCEX, providing insight into nurturing high quality training schemes, and ultimately shaping the future of neurology and those who will deliver it.

The scientific programme unfolded, with epilepsy topics concentrating on surgical techniques, and Foltyniec presented interesting work with regard to drug reduction in pre-surgical evaluation. But the epilepsy highlight was surely Baxendale on 'Epilepsy at the movies', in the satellite symposium, where we were amused by the complex partial seizure in 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs', intrigued by the pseudo-seizure at the presidential assassination in JFK and hooked by the time the post-watershed European films appeared.

Stroke papers outlined ethnic differences in stroke risk factors and stroke subtype, and Fulton demonstrated pathophysiological differences in small and large vessel stroke.

As enthusiastic investigators took the platform in turn, conquered nerves and answered



Delegates at the meeting in the foyer at the Grand hotel.

tough questions, a few other eager members took their turn at the tee after polishing rusty clubs and practising their swing, they then battled it out on the fairways and greens, hoping to achieve a semi-respectable score not too far off par, in the ABN golf outing.

'When in Rome, do as the Romans do', was not strictly true of the ABN in Brighton, although Manji, Nisbet and Churchill gave historical accounts of the gay scene, gay pride and the pink pound era, encouraging us to remove the taboo of HIV testing and outlined the therapeutic relevance of CD4 counts and viral loads in determining the aetiology of opportunistic infections in HIV infected individuals.

In multiple sclerosis the grey/white matter debate rages on, and was expanded further by exciting work from Gilmore using myelin protein immunohistochemistry to demonstrate that grey matter demyelination is more extensive than white matter demyelination throughout the spinal cord. Other MS research took the form of the initial clinical presentation findings (Hirst), MRI and post-mortem correlates (Schmierer), and an initial study on treating relapses at home (Chataway).

Up-to-date clinical series of CSF opening pressures and BMIs (Whiteley), and on neuroborreliosis (Lovett) added to daily neurological practice, while Pearson expounded on the

developing clinico-radiological entity of posterior reversible encephalopathy syndrome that is clearly a 'PRESing situation'.

As at previous ABNs and probably not the last either, neurology at the coalface in the form of acute liaison neurology was described as 'enjoyable, rewarding and resulting in a reduction of in-patient stay', by none other but by an acute neurologist (Dunn).

Dynamic, entertaining and revolutionary could only describe the guest lecture on 'Motion and emotion: the role of the basal ganglia' by Professor Yves Agid from Hopital Pitie-Salpetriere, who thrilled and amazed

us with the effect of brain stimulation on his patients and on monkeys' affect. The science was great but the accent alone would have been enough to keep us in our seats, and certainly provided the essential *je ne sais quoi!*

Following an excellent ABN dinner and late-night disco the closing morning session certainly carried a more relaxed air, as the workplace suit turned into casual trousers with open necked shirts. The agenda too, a new venture for the ABN, was informal, with a fantastic case fest won by Monaghan with his tragic case of 'The woman who mistook the past for the present', a case of Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome after total parenteral nutrition that in essence completely lacked thiamine.

Having almost forgotten to mention the ABN fun-run, it certainly can be said that the ABN in Brighton offered something for all tastes and persuasions. It was an exciting and diverse venue that boasted a packed scientific programme of 24 platforms, eight cases and 58 posters with closing scientific research platforms from Rosser, Spillantini and Collinge. It waits to be seen how London and Cambridge will measure up in size and performance.

Ann Johnston

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## CONFERENCE PREVIEW: 6th Annual Brain Injury Legal Seminar

London, UK, 21 September, 2006.

The Brain Injury Social Work Group, in partnership with Stewart Solicitors, are organising the programme for the 6th Annual Brain Injury Legal Seminar with presentations aimed at a wide range of professionals working within the field of brain injury and other related areas. The seminar will address topical issues of law, ethics and practice that will be of relevance to those working in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The keynote speaker, Professor Keith

Andrews is the Director of the Institute of Complex Neuro-Disability, Professor, Centre for Leadership and Practice Innovation, Southbank University London and is highly regarded as an expert in profound brain injury and neuro-disability. He will deliver an address entitled 'Practical Decision Making in Withholding and Withdrawing Treatment' which will offer invaluable information including that of his own clinical experience and that of research.

Nathan Tavares, Counsel, Outer Temple Chambers, London will talk on 'The impact of Freeman-v-Lockett on state funding of care' which will shed light on the contentious issues of compensation monies and the responsibility for the funding of care by local authorities.

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