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Editorial

Association of Surgeons in Training Conference: Manchester 2013

A B S T R A C T

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The Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT) is a professional body and registered charity working to promote excellence in surgical training for the benefit of junior doctors and patients alike. With a membership of over 2000 surgical trainees from all ten surgical specialities, the association provides support at both regional and national levels throughout the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. Originally founded in 1976, ASiT is independent of the National Health Service (NHS), Surgical Royal Colleges, and specialty associations. The 2013 Annual Conference in Manchester brought together over 700 delegates for an educational weekend programme with expert guest speakers. Cutting edge clinical updates were complimented by debates on current training in surgery and focussed parallel sessions. The weekend started with 13 pre-conference courses covering a diverse range of topics including laparoscopic skills, ultrasound for surgeons, surgical drawing, core skills in neurosurgery and a masterclass in journal club. A record number of 1458 abstract submissions were received and those successful competed for 22 awards representing nearly £4000 in trainee prizes and bursaries. As the only national surgical trainee meeting for all specialties, ASiT continues to grow and we look forward to an even larger and more successful international conference next year.

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1. Conference report

As the only pan-speciality national conference for surgical trainees in the UK and Ireland, the Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT) annual meeting offers a unique opportunity for clinical updates, training courses, research presentations and careers talks specifically aimed at surgical trainees. Combined with numerous prizes, a Charity Gala Dinner and the opportunity to socialise with colleagues from across the country, the weekend has become an essential date in the diary for all surgical trainees (Figs. 1–7).

Following on from the success of ASiT's recent conference meetings in Sheffield in 2011 and Cardiff in 2012^{1,2} this year Manchester played host to over 700 delegates from the UK, Republic of Ireland and overseas. With a record number of 1458 abstract submissions, the conference offered an excellent forum for presenting trainee audit and research work. The trends over recent years, together with the abstract submission categories are detailed in Table 1. Following a rigorous peer-review process, the highest scoring abstracts were accepted for poster presentations, with the best selected for presentation in one of the four oral prize presentation sessions.

In total, over £4000 in prizes, grants and bursaries were available for the best conference trainee and medical student presentations. Numerous surgical associations, charities and companies have joined together with ASiT and other surgical speciality trainee associations to sponsor these, and all offer a prestigious addition to

a surgeon's curriculum vitae. Details of these awards are provided in Table 2.

The pre-conference course day started the meeting on Friday, in advance of the main plenary sessions on Saturday and Sunday. With a record number of 13 courses running simultaneously, these popular training sessions offered great value-for-money and covered a broad range of topics useful for trainees at all levels. We are grateful to the work of the course convenors in organising these, who are listed in Table 3.

The pre-conference course day finished with a 'Welcome Reception and Light Dinner' in the Manchester Central conference venue. This year we hosted Mr Ian Ritchie, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd) who provided a thought-provoking welcome speech.

Following a warm welcome from Mr Steve Hornby (Surgical Registrar and ASiT President 2012–2013), Saturday morning saw the start of the main conference, and programme highlights are listed in Table 4.

The plenary sessions started with an emotive talk from Dr Kate Granger, a Registrar in Elderly Care Medicine and herself a terminally ill cancer patient. Dr Granger offered the audience a chance to "laugh, cry and reflect" on her journey through being a patient, including her recent prominent media work as a strong advocate for the Liverpool Care Pathway. With the benefit of her own experiences, she extolled the importance of treating patients as people and putting them at the centre of our care.



Fig. 1. Delegates practice with fresh animal tissue on a pre-conference skills course.

Mr Chris Oppong, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon and Chairman of the Board of Operation Hernia, spoke next with a fascinating insight into humanitarian surgery. Talking about the unmet needs of surgical care in the developing world, he also outlined the role that Operation Hernia has played in supporting this.

Following this came the ever-popular 'Question Time' session with the Royal Surgical Colleges, featuring Professor Norman Williams (President, Royal College of Surgeons of England), Mr Mike Lavelle-Jones (Vice-President, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh), Mr Michael McKirdy (Council Member Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow) and Professor Patrick Broe (President, Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland). There

followed presentations regarding the work and role of each of the various Royal Colleges with a robust questioning for the trainee audience.

This year's ASiT Lecture was provided by Mr David O'Regan, Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon, himself a former ASiT President and founder of ASiT's Silver Scalpel Award. Addressing the 'the Role of a Mentor in Surgical Training' he provided an insightful discussion regarding those who have helped change the directions of our lives and careers, challenging us to plan out our goals and career plans with suitable mentors. This was followed by the formal launch of the ASiT National Mentoring Scheme Pilot by our Director of Education. Phase 1 is currently underway.



Fig. 2. Delegates practice laparoscopic surgery skills on a pre-conference course.

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