

Slightly more exotic: attending ASAPO's conference in Cairns

An ODP now working in Australia reflects on the value of attending professional conferences, and not only when they take place on a tropical coastline on the other side of the world...

You may have been fortunate enough to attend the CODP annual conference in Dudley last May, or maybe you will be going to this year's at Deansgate Hilton in Manchester on 7 to 8 May. These events are extremely worthwhile, and I would recommend making the time to go to this year's CODP conferences, including the first national student conference in Birmingham on 26 March. However, there are slightly more exotic conference locations...

Conference on the coast

I migrated to Melbourne four years ago. As a deputy theatre manager in the UK, much of my time was spent in front of a computer, but my role in Australia is more that of a traditional anaesthetic practitioner (to my knowledge, there are no opportunities for surgical or recovery roles for non-nurses in Australia).

Last year, having just played in the Australian Football League Masters National Carnival in Cairns, North Queensland, I keenly grasped the opportunity to attend 'New Horizons', the 11th Annual Australasian Society of Anaesthesia Paramedical Officers (ASAPO) Conference and Trade Exhibition, held on 9 to 11 October at the Hilton on Cairns Waterfront.

Cairns is a vibrant, cosmopolitan regional city with warm, sunny tropical days (29°C to 33°C) tempered by cooling onshore breezes. It provides easy access to the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics rainforests. Captain James Cook named Trinity Bay and Trinity Inlet in 1770, and the surrounding coastal mountains and mangroves have changed little since that time.

From ultrasound to fruit bats

ASAPO (www.asapo.org.au) is an organisation whose membership comprises a 'broad church' of healthcare staff providing skilled anaesthetic assistance to the anaesthetist. There are locally trained anaesthetic technicians, some of whom are enrolled nurses who have undertaken approved further training and subsequently employed as anaesthetic 'techs' along with a number of UK-trained ODPs and New Zealand-trained anaesthetic techs.

113 delegates from Australia and New Zealand attended an interesting series of presentations provided largely by anaesthetists, anaesthetic techs and other healthcare professionals from Cairns Base Hospital.

Following the opening address by John Byrne, the acting chair of ASAPO, the conference commenced with a trio of lectures that dovetailed neatly into one another. Dr Andrew

Potter, an English anaesthetist working as a staff specialist in Cairns, presented an informative session on ultrasound theory and its applications in the operating room, including imaging for regional anaesthesia and vascular access. His colleague Dr Robert Grace followed with a highly entertaining presentation focusing on peripheral nerve blocks and the associated risk of systemic

local anaesthetic toxicity. Dr Sean McManus spoke about crisis management, looking particularly at strategies and techniques developed in other industries and their application in anaesthesia.

The last formal component of the first day was the presentation of the Alison Holloway Award for 2009. It is awarded to the best case study or research paper relating to the area of anaesthesia or intensive

care by an anaesthetic tech, paramedical officer or assistant. After careful consideration, the judging panel selected Linda Long's submission from Charles Gardiner Hospital in Perth, titled 'The implementation of intra-operative cell salvage in obstetrics'.

The day concluded with a reception on the hotel terrace where all were amused by the antics of the resident spectacled flying foxes – an endangered species of fruit bat.

Preparing for registration

Delegates returned the next morning for a presentation by Ray Murtagh regarding ASAPO's approach to national registration, for which the federal and state governments are due to jointly consider submissions from suitable aspiring health professions this year. As a forerunner to this major project, ASAPO plans to introduce voluntary registration, along similar lines to that undertaken in the UK by the CODP's predecessor, the AODP.

The next lecture that specifically interested me concerned bispectral index (BIS) and to a lesser extent M-entropy given by Dr James Sartain also from Cairns Base Hospital, since my hospital is just starting to collect data on BIS scores of paediatric patients. One of the key messages was the current lack of reliability of BIS, particularly in the presence of opiates, ketamine and nitrous oxide.

The final presentation that I was able to attend was given by Dr Sandy Donald, who as a squadron leader in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Specialist Reserve served as an anaesthetist in an RAAF surgical team deployed to the Dutch military hospital in Tarin Kowt, Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan. The team dealt with a wide range of casualties, including a number of gunshot and blast injuries. Of particular interest were the solutions to the problems

'All were amused by the antics of the resident spectacled flying foxes'



Neil Addis



A good setting for a professional conference: Cairns Esplanade Lagoon

of a long supply chain. These included oxygen generation and the use of frozen blood products that allowed successful management of multiple major trauma cases without dependence upon frequent deliveries of replacement stock.

While the conference carried on for a successful third day, I sadly had an early flight home arranged, so Saturday evening was my last foray. Dressed in the ubiquitous Hawaiian shirts (the men) and Polynesian floral garlands (the ladies), we enjoyed an excellent tropical buffet dinner and dance. Reluctantly, after one final morn-

ing dip in the fantastic Cairns Esplanade Lagoon, I packed my bags and returned to a cold and wet Melbourne.

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A worthwhile thing to do

The conference was my first opportunity to speak to anaesthetic techs from other parts of the country, and I made some great friendships.

Conferences are as valuable for who you meet and the ideas you share as for the lectures that are presented formally. I found the BIS and ultrasound lectures particularly relevant to my work, and it was

interesting to compare ASAPO and its quest for national registration with the long campaign for the same in the UK.

Acknowledgment

The author thanks Neil Addis – a fellow UK-trained ODP working as an anaesthetic technician at Ramsay Private Hospital in Cairns – for his help and for the use of his photograph.

Andy Schermuly, senior paediatric and adolescent anaesthetic technologist, Royal Children’s Hospital, Melbourne

CODP National Student Conference & Exhibition

PCT – patient care & technology



The CODP is proud to announce their first national Student Conference & Exhibition on the 26th March 2010 at Birmingham City University. Join us for this stimulating day-long event

Registration: 09.20am
 Start time: 10.00am
 Ticket prices: £15 members and £50 non-members (includes membership)

Refreshments including lunch are provided

- Network, share experiences and engage with other students from across the UK
- An exciting line-up confirmed, including keynote speaker Paul Wicker, head of perioperative studies, author and visiting professor, Nanjing Medical University and Hospital and talks by anaesthetics consultant Dr Paul Diprose and advanced practitioners
- Poster presentation competition – finalists’ work presented and Intersurgical University Shield winner announced
- Exhibition to explore throughout the day
- University Challenge Quiz – which team will triumph with their perioperative knowledge?

Poster abstracts deadline extended to 4th January 2010. For information or to submit an abstract, email office@codp.org.uk Places are limited so reserve yours – complete a delegate booking form at www.codp.org.uk and return to office@codp.org.uk Ticket payments can be made from the 4th January 2010.