

The Role of the Academic Vice President

With only a few months to go before the BAD Annual Meeting, in addition to providing an update of academic activities, I thought it might be useful to give an outline of the role of the Academic Vice President, in the hope of stimulating others to think “Yes, I’d like to do that job one day!”

As you may recall, this voluntary post as one of ‘the three Presidents’ at the BAD is elected for two years. In addition to the niche responsibilities for education and research, the Academic Vice President works closely with the President, Clinical Vice President, Secretary, Secretary-Elect and Treasurer, supported by our excellent Secretariat, to make a ‘significant’ contribution to Dermatology now and hopefully in the future.

For those of you thinking of one day ‘throwing your hat into the ring’, the role takes up about a day’s work each week, arranged flexibly with plenty of burning of the evening and weekend oil! Most of the relevant BAD committee meetings take place on the third Thursdays of the month, preceded by the Wednesday evening Officers’ meeting, usually from 5 ‘til 9 (reminds me of a ‘Western Country’ song). But don’t be put off! Both Mark and Colin have chaired these meetings with great aplomb, and the importance of the numerous matters discussed is often diluted with a bit of fun with old and new friends.

During a typical year the Academic Vice President chairs six Education Committee meetings, sits on three Research Committee meetings and reports back to the BAD Executive Committee on four occasions. The Conferences and Events Committee meets about four times a year and mostly deals with the Annual Meeting (organised by the Academic VP one year and the Clinical VP the next, with superb administrative support from the team). Other *ad hoc* meetings might include those to organise educational meetings and courses at the BAD and new initiatives such as *DermSchool* and the e-learning projects, in addition to selective interaction with the Royal College of Physicians, etc. Here is an update on various activities.

Education Issues

Meetings and Courses

The ‘Trainee Assessment for the Assessors’ half-day courses in December and February went very well indeed with enthusiastic evaluation from over forty attendees at each meeting. With expert and interactive input from educationalists from the RCP, these courses are aimed at Clinical Supervisors and Educational Supervisors and I hope these will become a regular feature of the meetings’ calendar. The next annual STC Chairmen and Programme Directors’ meeting is on Thursday 23 April 2009.

Arrangements for the BAD Annual Meeting in Glasgow are progressing well, including the Pre-Conference Trainee session and the first annual *DermSchool* meeting for medical students and Foundation Years 1 and 2 doctors. To encourage attendance at *DermSchool*, up to a hundred travel bursaries will be available from the BAD Education Fund. I am most grateful to Jonathan Batchelor and Aoife Lally, our

trainee representatives, for their help in organising the programme. Our *DermSchool* planning meetings have been very democratic with plenty of enthusiastic input from medical students and busy Foundation Year doctors, as members of the BAD students' group.

In addition, the annual THESIS / BAD / BSID Research Course, the THESIS meeting, will take place at Willan House on 11-12 June 2009. As usual, we have an excellent group of speakers and 'approachable advisers'. In acknowledgment of there being limited local study leave funds, up to forty bursaries will be available to trainees to offset the cost of attending the meeting.

The Specialty Certificate Examination (SCE)

The first Specialty Certificate Examination (SCE) in Dermatology is scheduled to take place on Thursday 24 September 2009. There are plenty of questions in the 'bank' and the Question Writing Group, chaired by Robert Charles-Holmes, met again in January to prepare more best-of-five questions for future SCEs. The Examining Board, chaired by Richard Groves, met at the end of January to finalise the first 'paper', which will be delivered electronically.

In order to be awarded the CCT, it will be compulsory for trainees who began dermatology training in August 2007 or later to pass the SCE, but there should be some flexibility regarding when the exam is taken, usually at the end of Year 2. The SCE may also be taken by pre-August 2007 trainees.

e-Learning Projects

Some progress has been made in stimulating interest amongst dermatologists in the Department of Health-funded e-Learning for Health project. Following discussions with the DH project organisers, the BAD e-Learning Editorial Strategy Group (ESG) met recently with a view to finding a Clinical Lead for this important project, mapped to the dermatology curriculum and the SCE in Dermatology. Robert Charles-Holmes has kindly accepted this challenging role and is currently in the process of recruiting 10-12 Module Editors. There will be many opportunities for dermatologists and trainees to contribute to this ambitious project, which will run in parallel to the Validated Case Archive (VCA) e-learning project, led for dermatology by Ginny Hubbard.

Research Issues

Research Funding

The BAD and BSF have previously agreed to fund two Clinical Research Training Fellowships, each for 3 years to allow successful applicants to study for a PhD. Graham Ogg and I recently had an extremely promising meeting with representatives of the Medical Research Council and BSF with a view to the MRC matching the BAD / BSF funding in order to create up to four MRC / BAD / BSF Clinical Research Training Fellowships, staggered over a 3-year period.

The first of these fellowships should be advertised this summer, with a closing date in the autumn and interviews in January 2010, the process being organised by the MRC with flexibility and significant input from us as the 'partner' groups. This strategy is

aimed at producing high quality skin science research from suitable dermatology trainees, some of whom will become the academic dermatologists of the future.

Research on the Website

We will be developing the website to provide information on a number of aspects of research, including academic centres, areas of expertise, routes of training, sources of support for research funding and information for Educational Supervisors. Some of these issues are covered at the THESIS meetings and Mike Ardern-Jones and I will be editing a series of articles for the BAD Newsletter and website, to be collated in a THESIS / BAD / BSID Research Handbook.

Academic Dermatology On-line Survey Database

A big thank you to those of you who have already completed the on-line survey. This is a documentation of academic contributions rather than a survey to seek opinions. For this reason it takes about an hour to complete the first time (sorry but you'll enjoy it) and it can be saved and revisited, before returning as an attachment to our Academic Administrator, @bad.org. To date over a hundred on-line surveys have been returned from Ordinary, Honorary, Retired, Trainee and Associate members. Our aim is to form a database at the BAD that can be updated by members when they have something to add. The Academic Dermatology On-line Survey Database should eventually become a most interesting historical record.

Research Mentoring Scheme

Don't forget the BAD's Research Mentoring Scheme which was conceived two years ago. A number of clinical researchers and clinicians have offered to act as mentors for trainees (or consultants) interested in research. This can be organised on a regional basis or nationally, and those seeking advice may contact @bad.org for a list of potential mentors.

Dr Clive Archer
Academic Vice President