

BAD Newsletter article: From Clive B Archer, Bristol Dermatology Centre, Bristol Royal Infirmary (UBHT), Bristol, BS2 8HW

THESIS update

100 up and counting

Last year THESIS reached the landmark of 100 theses in The Skin Investigation Society Library. To celebrate this century of theses, THESIS has set up a biennial research fellowship of £500. This is to be awarded in retrospect to the best dermatology MD or PhD over a two year period and is designed to help offset the increasing examination fees and the cost of preparing a high quality thesis. The Research Fellowship is administered as part of the B.A.D./Dowling Club Research Fellowships and the first of these for 2005 has been awarded to Dr Afrina Alam for the study: 'Clinical and Genetic Features of the Multiple Cutaneous and Uterine Leiomyomatosis Syndrome'.

The next THESIS meeting will be held as a joint THESIS/B.A.D./BSID Research Course, and is planned to take place in London on 11-12th May 2006. More about this later.

Membership of THESIS is free and there are currently around 160 members, consisting of registrars (SpRs and Research Fellows) and recently-appointed consultants. The most recent THESIS meeting was held in Bristol in 2003 and one of the aims of this article is to introduce THESIS to the newer SpRs.

The Skin Investigation Society (THESIS) was established in 1990 as an informal research group with the aim of encouraging young dermatologists to pursue a theme of research, hopefully towards a higher degree. The concept of THESIS was to do for research what The Dowling Club had done for clinical dermatology and to complement the existing excellent research societies such as the BSID, ESDR and SID.

THESIS was launched at the Dowling Club weekend meeting in London in 1990 with a presentation on 'Research in Dermatology Training'. We have since held research meetings every two years or so in either Bristol or London. There are usually a series of peer presentations on 'the joys and pitfalls of research', with plenty of discussion and additional wisdom provided by carefully selected 'approachable advisers'. There has certainly been an emphasis on fun, not to mention the sporting events and occasional injuries!

The THESIS Library was established in 1992 at the B.A.D. headquarters in St Andrew's Place, later moving to Fitzroy Square. As Hon. Secretary of the B.A.D., Rodney Dawber was very positive about the formation of The Skin Investigation Society Library. Following a letter from me to all B.A.D. members to ask for a donation of theses to the THESIS Library there was an enthusiastic response and we began with 35 theses. The THESIS Library has since been supported entirely by THESIS funds. By February 2004, when I gave a presentation to the Dowling Club on 'MDs from the THESIS Library' there were 101 theses including 91 MDs (10 DMs), 7 PhDs (1 DPhil), 1 MSc and 2 essays. At the time of writing we are up to 106 theses, ranging from 1939 to 2005.

The first thesis, submitted as a DM to Oxford in 1939 is from GA Hodgson entitled 'A dissertation on cheiropompholyx in industry'. The 100th thesis, submitted as an MD to London in 2003 by Fiona Child is entitled 'Molecular studies in primary cutaneous B-cell lymphoma'. The completion of a thesis in dermatology from 1930 until 1960 was sporadic but the numbers of those submitting theses increased in the 1960s, a trend that continued in the next two decades. This trend increased considerably in the 1990s when there were 40 theses submitted, including 3 PhDs.

Theses have been submitted to a wide selection of universities, including 36 to London, 12 to Cambridge, 7 to Oxford, 6 to Dublin and 5 to Bristol. Topics studied have included eczema/dermatitis (15), lymphoma/skin tumours (7), blistering disorders (7), immunology (12), physiology/pharmacology (17), psoriasis (9), photodermatology (7), acne (5), connective tissue diseases (6) and urticaria (4). For further details by all means look up THESIS on the B.A.D. website. You will see that early theses include well-known names such as PD Samman, AJ Rook, SC Gold, PFD Naylor, HTH Wilson and CD Evans.

The style of research changed around 1960 in what I have called 'the science of the 60s'. Well-known authors include H Baker, DJ Cripps, RS Wells, KA Grice and JM Marks. The Newcastle influence became obvious in the 1970s with theses from MM Black, JL Burton, SK Goolamali, RJ Pye and NB Simpson. An emphasis on pharmacology was obvious in the work of DD Munro, A du Vivier, PG Godwin and A Kobza Black. My SR/registrar colleagues and friends from St Johns in the 1980s are well represented including CR Lovell, yours truly, E Wong, CA Holden, J Ashworth, and GM Murphy. Theses from the Professors make interesting reading and there are a fair share of theses in the 1990s and more recently on blistering disorders and lymphoma. By 2004 there were 7 PhDs in the library one from MW Greaves in 1967 and at the time of writing a further 8 PhDs from 1991 onwards.

The Skin Investigation Society (THESIS) Library currently houses 106 theses covering a fascinating range of subjects, and I am always looking out for new additions, young or old. In a prospective way, registrars should have an extra copy of their thesis bound and sent to me in Bristol or direct to the B.A.D. I will then send them a cheque for £30 from The Skin Investigation Society towards the cost of the binding.

THESIS continues to thrive as an informal research group and the THESIS/B.A.D./BSID Research Course should provide a structured way for registrars and 'young' consultants to continue to be stimulated to become involved in research. The format of the meeting planned for B.A.D. House will include talks from 'approachable advisers' on a number of aspects of research, including research techniques, and I am very keen to retain the concept of peer presentations, with those that have done some research passing on advice through experience to those new to dermatology. For further information about the Research Course in May 2006, please write to me in Bristol. (clive.archer@ubht.swest.nhs.uk)

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