Presidential Letter

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In my last letter, I talked extensively about our new textbook “Day Case Surgery”. Just after the journal went to press, we negotiated a 20% discount from Oxford University Press for all BADS members which is valid until December 2012. To take advantage of this offer, you need to log into the members’ area of the BADS website and then follow the link which will take you to a special part of the Oxford University Press online shop. In addition to our own textbook, the discount applies to all of the OUP medical titles, providing even greater benefit from your BADS membership.

A few members have reported difficulties accessing the restricted part of the BADS website. We have recently done some upgrading to the servers which should have solved these issues, but please get in touch with the office or webmaster if you are still experiencing problems. The new servers mean that we will be able to add even more content to this area, including a package of educational materials to support revalidation in day surgery, so keep an eye on this part of the web.

Another benefit of your membership is a substantial reduction in the cost of the annual scientific meeting and I hope that many of you will have booked your place by now. After a gap of five years, we have returned to Torquay, which was a very popular venue last time. We have negotiated some reduced rail fares with First Great Western which should make the journey less daunting. Details of this offer, which applies to travel from First Great Western stations and some connecting routes, can be found on the conference booking form.

The theme of this year’s meeting is “Challenges in day surgery” and one of the biggest challenges is managing the huge variations in practice which we continue to observe. Appropriately then, Philip Da Silva will start the meeting by discussing the diversity of practice which has been identified by his work with the NHIS Atlas of Variation. My President’s lecturer, Professor Jan Jakobsson from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, will expand this into a review of variation within Europe and will also highlight some examples of excellent practice which we should adopt here. Many will argue that variation is both inevitable and desirable, with more than one way of achieving similar outcomes. This concept will be explored in detail using the example of hernia repair, showing the importance of selecting the best operation for each patient taking into account the expertise of the individual operator. The influence of the individual will be further considered by Trevor Dale, with some fascinating lessons on the impact of human factors, both beneficial and harmful, from the airline industry. This will be supplemented by a session considering the aspects which make up the ideal day surgery team, including the expectations and responsibilities of the patient, a theme further explored by Alf Collins in his Keynote lecture.

Another current challenge is how to best use the day surgery facilities to manage non-elective cases. One of the plenary sessions will examine a variety of possible pathways which have been used in a wide range of specialities. We also have two lively debates, one exploring the optimum model for preoperative assessment, the other examining the financial viability of a common laparoscopic procedure in the current challenging economic environment. One opportunity to maximise income is to ensure that clinical activity is correctly recorded and charged for, which means getting the clinical codes right every time. Sue Eve-Jones is guaranteed to breathe a fresh spark of life into a potentially uninspiring topic, a lecture not to be missed.

For our anaesthetic colleagues, we have again mapped much of the programme to their Royal College matrix. Torquay will also offer the usual free papers and trade exhibition and will see the launch of three new BADS booklets. These will complement the theme of the meeting and cover surgery under local anaesthesia, the optimal day surgery patient pathway and a long overdue update of the skills mix booklet, looking at staffing and management issues in day surgery. In addition, you will get plenty of opportunities to network and exchange ideas with likeminded colleagues and can, as always, expect to come back enthused and inspired. June is fast approaching, so book your place now!

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