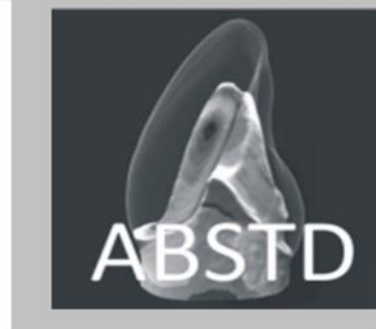


# Association of Basic Science Teachers in Dentistry

## Newsletter - May 2017



### President's Message

At a recent meeting of the Association<sup>1</sup>, themed around Oral Biology teaching, some key issues were re-emphasised. There was universal concern about the '...dumbing down' of Oral Biology in contemporary integrated curricula, together with what one speaker described as a '*...lack of fascination in what is being taught*', a *failure of students to engage with oral bioscience topics over and above that necessary to pass assessments*'. Whilst neither of these issues are new, the context and passion with which they were expressed has placed them at the forefront of our agenda for change. Modern, outcome based curricula offer advantages in terms of contextualised teaching, illustrating the relevance of what is being taught to clinical practice. But areas of core basic science lacking direct application to the clinic may be eclipsed. Nevertheless, they are fundamental to developing the sound scientific foundation on which an understanding of dental practice is built. The scholarship which drives clinical decision making processes must be retained in our curricula even if its relevance is not immediately obvious, because, without this knowledge infrastructure achieving the goals required in an outcome based curriculum will be progressively reduced to a minimum level of knowledge necessary to perform a procedure. To avoid this, we need to redouble our efforts to retain the Oral Biosciences as a distinct entity in the dental curriculum, supported by staff with the skills and passion necessary to engage our students. Far too often we hear about faculty

being lost, with teaching areas unique to dentistry being incorporated into the remit of wider biomedical departments which lack sufficient understanding of Dentistry to explain their relevance. If Oral Biology is to survive, it is time to redouble our efforts to explain its importance so that resources can be found to encourage passionate and inspiring individuals into this area and we can continue to engage the upcoming generations of aspiring dental professionals.

At a personal level, my second three year term of office as President will come to an end in September 2018 which means that at the next AGM (see below) it will become necessary we will have to select a '*President Elect*'. If you are an ABSTD member in good standing and are interested in becoming more involved with the work of the Association please consider standing.

On a more sombre note, recent weeks have seen the passing of two leaders of the Dental profession, Professors Crispian Scully and Ivor Kramer, both former Deans of the Eastman and distinguished scientists and clinicians pre-eminent in the fields of Oral Medicine and Pathology. They will be remembered by their numerous contributions to the literature, many of them relevant to the Oral Biosciences.

### Forthcoming Meetings

*ADEE 43rd Annual Meeting: This will take place in Vilnius, Lithuania (23rd-25th August 2017)*

*ABSTD Satellite Meeting (5<sup>th</sup> September 2017) and BSODR Annual Meeting (6th-8th September 2017)*

A half day meeting, to include our AGM will be held at Plymouth University PM on the 5th of September immediately prior to the BSODR meeting. This will be followed by an informal dinner for those staying over for the BSODR meeting. The theme will be '*Biomedical Science Teaching in Dentistry; Current and Future Challenges*' and an exciting programme will be announced shortly.

<sup>1</sup> Thanks are due to Paul Anderson and colleagues at Bart's and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry for hosting the Spring Meeting in February 2017. Because this meeting flagged several key issues, a separate summary will be posted on the website in due course.

## Meetings

### *Journal of Laryngology and Otology (JLO) Study Day (4<sup>th</sup> May 2017)*

Although primarily directed towards the needs of practicing and trainee ENT Surgeons parts of the meeting emphasised the overlap between ENT and Dentistry. JLO ([www.jlo.co.uk](http://www.jlo.co.uk)) was developing a website with a range of resources many of which are open access.

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### *ADEE/ADEA Joint Meeting (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> May 2017)*

This meeting, entitled 'Shaping the Future of Dental Education' brought together Dental academics Europe and the US for a 'brainstorming' meeting aimed at providing a consensus view of what dental education might look like in 10 years' time. It was based around group discussion of four main themes, Assessment, Inter-professional Engagement, Globalisation and the Impact of New Technological and Scientific Discoveries. Each theme had take-home messages for the biomedical sciences but that dealing with Technological and Scientific Advances had a more direct relevance. Major challenges relate to deciding what we need to teach, and how to get our students to engage critically with these areas. A particular issue will be to decide what to drop from the curriculum as new subjects emerge, in order to prevent overload of an increasingly crowded curriculum. In terms of specifics, Regenerative Technologies, Monitoring of Dental Disease, Oral Microbiological Ecology and the Biology of the Microbiome and Genetics and Personalised Medicine, were flagged as key areas. Interestingly these are all topics which ABSTD has, at one time or another, discussed.

In order to optimise delivery we to explore how contemporary technologies might be better used to encourage student engagement. Could

### *Joint British Society for Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology (BSOMP) and Scandinavian Federation of Oral Pathology and Oral Medicine (SFOMOP) Annual Scientific Meeting (27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> April 2017)*

Part of this meeting focussed around a comparison of Oral Pathology teaching in the UK and Scandinavia. There are great differences in approach between jurisdictions and individual schools. But, all schools are faced with the challenges of an increasingly crowded timetable, reductions in staff numbers and increased pressures on those who remain. Given the overlap between microscopic oral pathology and oral histology there was a feeling that a joint meeting may be helpful to explore options for a shared approach. This is something will be seeking to take forward.

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we, for example, take more advantage of social media or gaming technologies. The paramount importance of generating a core understanding of research methodologies was emphasised as a foundation for appraisal of the literature central to evidence based health care. In this regard understanding critical appraisal of systematic reviews might be of more value than that of more focussed laboratory techniques which most students will not encounter in their future practices.

Despite the potential of the internet, access to some areas of the literature was, in some respects becoming more challenging than in the past. It is possible to find papers 'on-line' only to be frustrated by a requirement to pay a large fee to access them. This could be a barrier to the development of evidence based approaches and may benefit from further discussion.

Finally, this meeting offered an opportunity for networking and we have been able to establish new links with Dental education Associations overseas, notably with Brazil. This is the first time the Association has been able to establish contacts in South America.

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## Oral Biosciences Essay Prize

There have been 9 entries for our first Oral Biosciences Essay Prize from across Europe, all from Dental Students in good standing. But, it is a great pity that there were no entries from the newer dental professions, Dental Technology, Dental Therapy and Hygiene. The Judges and will report back in due course. We hope to be able to announce the winner either at the ADEE meeting in Vilnius in August or the BSODR meeting in Plymouth in September.