

“The Agile Association of Surgeons of Great Britain, Ireland and the World”

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Seasonal greetings, and welcome to the Winter 2015 Edition of the JASGBI, our electronic newsletter with reach. Loyal and avid readers will have noted a change in the frequency of the e-publication over the last two years as we experiment with new forms of communication with our members. In particular, this year has seen the launch of our monthly e-newsletter, @SGBI, to allow us the prompt and coherent dissemination of the many useful snippets of information and links which cross the desk of the President, the Board and the Chief Executive, and which we feel will be of use or interest to colleagues. Nevertheless, we are encouraged to note on our web metric analysis that each issue of the JASGBI is securing some 25,000 visits.

We also continue with our programme of Issues in Professional Practice. This is an occasional series of e-pamphlets on a wide range of subjects of interest, relevance and significance to surgical practice. IIPPs are widely read within and outside the profession. We encourage members with specialist subject knowledge who feel that they have a topic of interest and relevance to the IIPP programme to contact us. Issues in the past year have included:

- The Management of Gallstone Disease, republished on behalf of AUGIS
- Surgical Quality Assurance Meetings: Developing the Surgical Morbidity & Mortality Conference, published on behalf of CORESS
- Clinical Readership, published on behalf of the Association of Military and Trauma Surgeons
- The Clinical Informatics Revolution
- The future of Emergency General Surgery.

Wrap up warm! Chill winds are blowing from the South, as the reduction in Government expenditure ripples through the national economy and the public sector. While Health is ostensibly protected from the worst of the public expenditure controls, there is no doubt as to the

indirect and hidden consequences, as in the capping of wages and salaries, and in changes to pension provision. We have seen these pressures manifest in the evident discontent of many junior doctors in training posts this Autumn, and are very sympathetic to their concerns. It is not a great time to be a young graduate, burdened with University Debt, faced with escalating and even unattainable house prices, and squeezed in the wage packet.

All public sector organisations will have to do much more with much less, and now have to examine every aspect of their hallowed practices and modus vivendi. Commercial organisations have become very adept at harnessing information technology to customer needs, and the UK's Government Digital Service is now teaching the great departments of state how to work similarly in a "Digital by Default" world. A key principle of the Digital revolution is Agile methodology, whereby informatics systems are continually adapted to the needs of the end user or customer rather than to the perceived needs of the service provider itself.

To this end, your Executive Board has undertaken a radical examination of all aspects of the work and costs of the ASGBI in the past 12 months, in order to deliver a compelling membership offer at least cost. Key themes which have emerged from this review include:

- the implementation of modern IT and web systems which will allow us to engage easily with members on the move, through enhanced mobile device interfaces, and better use of social media based communication systems, including Facebook and Twitter
- the continued importance of the Annual Conference as a valued meeting place for professional discourse and social interaction, as well as a forum for excellent content and speakers. We now wish to capture this intellectual product and communications gold more professionally, and to disseminate it much more widely to national and international audiences, using models pioneered by luminary bodies such as Youtube and TEDsTalks.
- Encouragement to surgeons who are fluent in the concepts and language of IT and who are enthused by the challenges of radical change to take on Board level responsibilities in your Association.

Perhaps more importantly, we recognise that the future of the surgical profession and of the various subspecialty representative groups lies in cooperative working and in the sharing of

costs, while allowing each body to sustain and develop its individual identity and advocacy functions. To this end, we consider that the arguments for the development of a UK Surgical Week, which brings together a number of conferences in a single venue, are now compelling. Given the costs of attending conferences, and the difficulties for surgeons of all grades to take time of work to attend meetings, the need for a centrally supported Surgical Week is now unanswerable.

For some years, the ASGBI has worked towards this goal, in conference partnership with a range of other Associations, notably ICOSSET (Harrogate 2014), the EAHPBA (Manchester 2015) and with ATMS on an ongoing basis. We have led on the development of the Paperless Congress, and have drawn heavily upon our learning experience of 2014 and 2015 with this approach. We will continue to test new partners, new formats and new technologies in this strategy.

Behind the scenes, we are continuing to explore a range of options for closer working with the Speciality Associations of General Surgery and beyond. We are enormously grateful to the Executive Officers of those organisations for the positive and friendly approach which they have adopted in the search for durable solutions to the longer term challenges to the Profession, and to the cost base and viability of the individual Associations. The Speciality Presidents' Executive Board which we host is one such example of this work in action.

Turning to more parochial matters, we hope that you will enjoy the content of this issue of the JASGBI. As ever, we are particularly grateful to our regular contributors, including Giles Eyre on medico-legal matters, and the incomparable Mick Crumplin for another contribution from his excellent and erudite history of military trauma.

It remains a challenge to secure as wide a range of content as I would really like to publish. The JASGBI is a great vehicle for would be surgical writers and thespians to learn and hone their craft before a generous, sympathetic and supportive readership. This is your soap box to use.

I am very grateful to the President, Vice President and to all of my colleagues on the present Executive Board for creating such a collegiate and supportive atmosphere for experimentation and change in our Communications and Informatics strategy, as we bring along a new generation of professional leaders.

I am particularly grateful on a personal basis to Nick Gair and Emmanuel Amadiogwu for their efforts in developing and producing both the e-zine @SGBI and the JASGBI; and to Steve Johnson of Red Apple Design, based in Tewkesbury, who gives invaluable support and advice in the development of our e-publication strategy, realised most recently in the launch of a new e-Books section of the website.

I am also grateful on behalf of all of us for the hard work and loyalty of the office team through unsettling times. We all join in wishing you all a restful Xmas and a successful, happy and healthy 2016 as we prepare for an excellent conference in Belfast in 2016.