

15th Anaesthesia Update 26-30 January 2004: Belle Plagne, French Alps

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Introduction

This annual conference continues to increase in popularity among the anaesthetic fraternity. This year there were 320 participants, a new record. Apparently if the numbers continue to rise exponentially then by 2010 all the anaesthetists in the UK will be there! The meeting is definitely not just a skiing 'jolly.' The standard of presentation during the daily four and a half hours is very high. It is accredited for 15 CEPD points for those attending all the sessions. It is also remarkable how much additional informal CME can be acquired outside the lecture hall: talking 'shop' is the order of the day on chairlifts, cable cars, delightful piste side restaurants, hotel bars, dining room and even bedrooms.

Travel

The arrangements are well handled by Inghams Travel (www.inghams.co.uk). Our small group always go by *Eurostar* from Waterloo to Paris where there is enough time for an excellent dinner before boarding the overnight snow train with six-berth couchettes and a 'disco' carriage! Travelling this way adds two extra days skiing to the normal six available to those travelling by air. The Hotel El Dorador in Belle Plagne, where most delegates stay, is ideally situated directly across the road from the conference centre. The room key also doubles as the one for the ski locker and it is permitted to walk to one's bedroom in ski boots.

Lectures

These as usual lasted from 0800 hrs to 0945 hrs and from 1645 hrs to 1930 hrs. The usual format is 10 or 20 minute presentations and parallel workshops with the last evening lecture given by luminaries like Professor Leo Strunin (Fig.1),

Dr Stuart Ingram, Dr Archie Brain (Fig. 2), Dr John Gothard or indeed Dr Jonathan Fielden, who gave an interesting talk about the new consultant contract. Topics covered included among others: *Paediatrics, The Airway, Military Medicine* (experiences from Gulf War 2), *Out of Africa, ITU, Pain and Legal Issues*.

Very popular Case Report competition generated 11 entries. There were also 24 workshops running in parallel with plenary sessions.

Snow

The conditions were the best for many years with almost nightly falls of snow. Even our ageing group of nine 'super-veterans' thought that they could ski powder by the end of a week with local instructor Christophe (Fig. 3) who has looked after us for the past 8 years.

There were major benefits of having such an expert local guide. Firstly we bypassed many long chairlift queues by using the access reserved for '*ecole de ski*'.

today's
anaesthetist



Fig. 4
A gentle tree lined route!

harder than English bone!' and thirdly each day he booked a different and always excellent venue for a prolonged lunch.

Prize Winners



Fig. 5
John Barcroft also skis well!

Dr John Barcroft (Fig. 5) for the second year running, won the prize for the best short case by a consultant and Dr Hanif Meeran (The Heart Hospital) the personal organiser, donated by Pharmacia to the best presentation by an anaesthetist in training.

The annual St George's Cup Slalom Race was won by Dr Duncan Farquar-Thompson (Dorset County Hospital) with the ratio of his two obligatory runs being only 1.0012 (the winner is the person who is nearest to unity). He also received from Inghams a week for two at any hotel in their brochure.

Second was Dr Alex Bojarska (1.0018) from Hull, who was hotfoot back from African travels to both Cameroun and the Mercy Ship *Anastasis* in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Alex received an additional prize for being the fastest woman.

For fifteen years the conferences, the brainchild of Bernie Liban (www.doctorsupdates.com) have been organised by this delightful, charismatic quartet including Tom Hollway, Neil Soni and Viv Thomas. Bernie tells me that he has received several Emails from delegates especially newcomers saying 'it was the best thing they had ever attended'. As a 'veteran' of eight updates, I wholeheartedly agree – It's definitely a great way to earn CME. Long may it all continue.

"A SHIP LIKE NO OTHER"

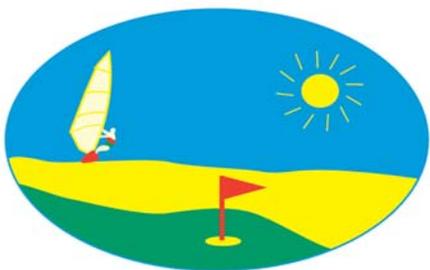
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