

International Continence Society

In November 2006, New Zealand hosted the 36th annual scientific meeting of the International Continence Society in Christchurch. Each year at its AGM the ICS members vote for the Convenor and venue of the meeting to be held 4 years later. This was the second occasion when the meeting was held south of the equator, the first being hosted by Richard Millard in Sydney in 1995.

The meeting had a distinctive New Zealand flavour. The Powhiri Welcome Ceremony was lead by Rev Maurice Gray, Upoko ki te runaka ki otautahi o kai tahu. The manuhiri or guests were represented by Walter Artibani, Linda Cardozo, Paul and Kirsten Abrams and their son Timothy, Jean-Jacques Wyndaele, Richard Turner-Warwick, Helmut Madersbacher, and Atsuo Kondo and his wife. They were accompanied by Margaret Arnold and Whaia Terepia and Mere Hibbs. The Tangata whenua were representatives of local kai tahu and the members of the local organising committee.

The Town Hall was beautifully decorated with Maori themes. The hongis and hairiru were warm and moving. Many overseas visitors found the ceremony quite moving and certainly very interesting. This was followed by a reception in the foyer.

Maori issues of continence promotion were addressed by a joint lunch-time discussion between some members from kai tahu and members of the ICS Continence Promotion Committee chair Diane Newman, Jan Paterson from Adelaide and Mark Weatherall of the NZCA. It is hoped this will provide a platform from which further continence promotion discussions can proceed. We need more Maori Health professionals to be become involved.

The ICS meeting was co-hosted with the NZ Continence Association and the Continence Foundation of Australia. Many from both organisations took advantage of the discounted registration fees applicable to members of all three organisations. There were 1500 delegates, and an additional 400 from the industry and accompanying people making a total of around 1900 who came to Christchurch for the occasion. The two associations have a future drawing closer together in a concerted approach to the promotion and political interactions needed to help our large number of patients.

Prof Don Wilson was the Chairman of the Scientific Committee. He moulded the accepted papers into a cohesive and interesting program with its interdisciplinary approach. Two innovations he introduced were interactive structured sessions on practical clinical management of incontinence principles. These were well received. Along with this there was a trial of hand-held keypads microphones to enhance interactive discussions after the plenary papers. Each delegate had a microchip in their name badge wallet which could be inserted into the keypad so when the questioner was speaking his/her name was projected onto the auditorium screen. There were some practical difficulties with the keypads falling on the floor. The sound quality was not ideal as it used cell phone technology. Still it will be of interest to watch how this technology develops.

For the first time at ICS there was a live operating link established between Christchurch Women's Hospital operating theatres and the auditorium with interaction both ways while overseas surgeons performed a sacro-colpopexy. Thanks to Stuart Gowland and Mobile Surgical Services for establishing the link.

As with many large associations, ICS has had some political turmoil based on Ethics questions, open disclosure of financial interest, terms of office-bearing and personality clashes. A Constitution Review Committee was established at the AGM to focus on these issues. At the time of writing in late March this committee is aspiring towards a progressive set of recommendations to the ICS Trustees and Advisory board, so these can be put to the members at the AGM in Rotterdam in August, 2007.

ICS is a great opportunity to develop contacts in other parts of the world who are focusing on ways to improve the standard of healthcare for those with incontinence. For those interested this year's meeting will be in Rotterdam from August 19-24, and details are available on the web-site at www.icsoffice.org

The professional conference organisers of the conference were Jan Tonkin from The Conference Company in Auckland, and Sally Bary from Forum Meeting Planners in Hamilton. They were both a superb at their job and as organisers and participants, we are very grateful.

Ted Arnold,

Convenor of the Local Organising Committee, ICS 2006