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Vertical Transmission



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Where to start; so much has happened over such a short period of time. Perhaps I should commence by sincerely thanking the members of the society for the great honour that been bestowed upon me by my election as President for the next 2 years. It is a great privilege and a major responsibility to be asked to serve my own scientific society in this manner. I can only promise to work to the best of my ability to serve the both ASM membership and the microbiology profession.

My task has been made easier by the superb effort of my predecessor, A/Prof David Ellis. David's major achievement was the very difficult and highly significant task of driving the restructure of the National Office. It is due to David's foresight and ability to make some very

tough decisions that we now have a highly dedicated and hard-working young team of staff members whose overriding objective is to work cohesively together in serving the society and the membership. I know that I speak for both the Executive and the members in thanking David for leading the society with such energy and composure over the past 2 years; a very hard act to follow.

In attempting to do so, I am extremely fortunate to have such a supportive National Office and an outstanding Executive. Chris, Janette, Meg and Lina work very effectively together as a team and have transformed the way the day to day activities of the Society are conducted. Rest assured that your enthusiasm and hard work does not go unnoticed. Geoff Coombs and Hatch Stokes, as Vice-Presidents for Corporate and Scientific Affairs respectively, have been a tower of strength to David and I know that they will continue to carry out their duties very effectively. It is reassuring to know that I will also have the benefit of their substantial experience and excellent advice.

Writing this column just after the successful Sydney ASM meeting, I would also like to thank Tom Olma, Steven Siarakas and their committee for organising such an excellent scientific conference. I have never come across such a dynamic and enthusiastic duo. From the start they envisaged a meeting that would challenge the boundaries of our normal meeting format. It is a great testament to their drive and ability that

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they were able to achieve their objective, even when faced with some challenging IT problems that were not of their making. Janette Sofronidis from the National Office once more did an outstanding job as our professional conference organiser.

The Sydney meeting was also the first meeting where NSAC had a major organisational role. We are all grateful to Jon Iredell, Paul Young, Peter Cox and Hatch Stokes, as the 2004 NSAC Divisional Chairs, who achieved so much in putting together a meeting that had something for all of the members of ASM. We cannot underestimate the difficulty that they faced. There was no precedent, no-one from whom advice could be sought, no previous time line and no pre-existing operational plan. It was all developed as they went along. Future NSAC Chairs will benefit enormously from their leadership example.

Which brings me to the future. In this edition of *Microbiology Australia* there are two very important notices. Firstly, we are calling for nominations for the 2007 NSAC Divisional Chairs. This is your opportunity to contribute to your own society by coordinating the symposium programme of your division at the Annual Scientific Meeting to be held in Adelaide in July 2007. NSAC members also play an important role in determining the policy of ASM on important scientific, research and educational issues. Please flood us with nominations; we will find a role for everyone who nominates.

Secondly, we are calling for nominations for the 2004 Frank Fenner Award. This highly prestigious research award is given to our most promising younger researcher (no more than 15 years after the award of a PhD). The eligibility rules for this award were eased at the recent National Council meeting. You now simply have to have been an Associate Member or Member of ASM for 3 years and research done overseas is now taken into account. Please submit your application to the National Office by the December 10 deadline. There is no need to be formally nominated by another member.

There also are a number of government policy issues which will be of concern to members and, as information becomes available, I will keep you informed via *MA* and the website. The first of these, from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), deals with the implementation of the biological weapons convention and is outlined in this issue. It addresses the need for researchers to be aware of biosecurity regulations relating to the use of hazardous goods in the laboratory. Also in this issue, The Standing Committee on Clinical Microbiology report covers important issues relating to diagnostic laboratories.

Finally, I look forward to meeting as many of the members of the society as possible over the next 6 months. I intend to visit all State branches, presenting both a research seminar and a talk focussed on the future directions of ASM. I am very keen to hear your views about the future of ASM. Watch your local branch newsletter for further details.

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