
Conference Report

Society for Acute Medicine Autumn Meeting

Dr B Chadwick

The autumn meeting of the Society for Acute Medicine took us to the spectacular city of Edinburgh. More than 150 delegates attended this, the tenth meeting of the Society, by far the largest attendance to-date, and a clear reflection of the rapid expansion of this new sub-specialty. We were hosted by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, in their grand building on Queen Street, and were made to feel welcome by all the staff there. A special mention must go to the immaculately turned-out doorman who helped me find my way from the Royal College to my accommodation at a nearby hotel.

The programme began with a warm welcome from Dr Roger Smith, Vice President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. He reminded us of the important work which had been undertaken north of the Border, in the development of Acute Medicine and the concept of the medical admissions ward. This was followed by a very interesting presentation by Professor Keith Fox. He described best practice in the management of acute coronary syndromes, and gave us an insight into some of the current research in this area. Of particular interest were his ideas about the use of brain natriuretic peptide as a marker of severity of heart failure, along with its use in risk stratification of patients presenting with chest pain. No doubt this test will soon be added to the list of blood tests required to be normal before any patient can leave the A&E department. Next came a highly entertaining interactive session involving two case presentations by Dr. John Goldman and Dr. Donald McLeod. This took full advantage of the technology available in the lecture theatre, and we were all able to participate in choosing our favourite investigations in the context of the case.

Dr. Richard Davenport took us through the management of acute onset headache, which further highlighted some of the potential pit-falls and diagnostic conundrums we all face when dealing with this from day to day. Dr. David Cummings gave a whistle stop tour of haematology for the acute physician, sensibly keeping things as simple as possible! For the last session of the day, Andrew Marsden and Dr. Jamie Hogg gave us an insight into

some of the organisational changes that are currently being undertaken in the world of pre-hospital care.

With the clinical component of the first day complete, there came the serious business of the society dinner. This was held at a Rogue's restaurant in Edinburgh and featured some excellent food and wine, which flowed freely. This provided the perfect backdrop for the usual networking, gossiping and general catching up. It is a good opportunity to catch up with other trainees from schemes across the country and swap notes on procedures and training. Many thanks again go to the taxi driver who managed to get me back safely!

The second day started early at 9am, and several delegates looked rather the worse for wear. The Free Papers section involved presentations on community management of pulmonary embolism and the outcomes for patients admitted to hospital at weekends, who apparently do no worse than patients admitted at other times of the week. Then came a passionate talk about the future of telemedicine by Dr. James Ferguson, which featured a lot of entertaining cartoons, just right for those of us still recovering from the night before. Dr. Alistair Douglas then updated us on the latest Royal College report on Acute Medicine, and left us in no doubt that the Royal Colleges are firmly behind us in our efforts to establish Acute Medicine as a discipline with its own distinct identity. Following a break for coffee there was a session on the development of health care professionals in medicine led by Ms Sonia Lam and Dr. Liz Myers which was well received.

Following lunch Dr. Chris Gordon gave us a very entertaining talk on the management of falls in the elderly, which I have to say was excellent (he's my boss!). The meeting was rounded off by Ms. Jan Warner who talked to us about standards in acute care.

In closing the meeting, President of the Society, Paul Jenkins, paid tribute to the hard work of all the team from the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary who ensured another successful event. We were reminded of the next meeting, taking place in the Swindon Marriott Hotel on 14th / 15th April 2005. I look forward to seeing you all there!!

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