

Houston meeting report. Thursday April 30th to Tuesday May 4th 2009.

7 members and 4 accompanying partners attended the meeting in Houston, Texas, organised by President Graham Wood and hosted by Mark Wong, Chairman of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery at the Texas Medical Centre. The meeting was held at the Houstonian Hotel, Houston and based around the Hinds Symposium, which members attended.

The Hinds Symposium is an annual event (this was the nineteenth) organised by the Houston Society of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons in honour of Edward C Hinds who was the founder and first chairman of the Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery at the University of Texas Dental Branch. The featured speaker was Dr Robert Marx, the Professor of Surgery and Chief of the division of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery at the Miami Miller School of Medicine. Dr Marx is a familiar name to all involved in Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery due to his special interest and expertise in osteoradionecrosis and bisphosphonate induced osteonecrosis of the jaws.

Our host Mark Wong has been a personal friend of President Graham Wood for many years. Their friendship arose from the relationship between the Houston department and North Wales where Graham was a Consultant before moving to Glasgow. Texas residents used to spend 3 months of their training rotating to the North Wales unit in the 1970s and 80s. In fact Graham personally knew 16 of the attendees at the Hinds meeting.

Most members arrived on Thursday April 30th and met at the Hotel and in the evening were entertained to dinner at the Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen.

On the morning of Friday May 1st we assembled in the foyer of the Hotel while our hosts were engaged in a risk management seminar. After registration and lunch we joined the nearly 200 delegates for the Hinds Symposium and following the introduction and welcome from Dr James Wilson, the President of the Houston Society of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons, the meeting started with Dr Marx, the featured speaker talking on the subject of muco-cutaneous lesions. Dr Marx is a practising Oral Surgeon who has a special interest in pathology and sees a large number of Oral Medicine cases; his management of chronic ulcerative lesions, in particular ulcerative lichen planus with high dose steroids, was particularly interesting. Dr Adelaide Herbert, a paediatric dermatologist, followed with her talk on dermatological conditions. She started with the history of how Kendall and Hinch discovered steroids, for which they won the Nobel prize. She described her use of steroids for management of severe haemangioma and then talked about the use of immunosuppression for severe atopic dermatitis in particular ciclosporin, methotrexate and micophenolate.

Following a short break for tea there followed a discussion led by a panel consisting of Dr Marx and our own Stuart Hislop and Adrian Sugar, and chaired by Dr Anthony Pogrel. The topics discussed were Osteoradionecrosis, central giant cell granuloma and the odontogenic keratocyst, which has been renamed by the world health organisation as keratocystic odontogenic tumour, although the consensus was that the old name is to be preferred.

The last lecture of the day was given by Dr Anthony Atala who gave the Raymond Reid lecture. Dr Atala is a paediatric urologist and Professor of Regenerative Medicine and chair of urology at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine at Winston Salem, North Carolina. He introduced his talk by reminding us that it was 55 years since the first organ transplant, a kidney, and that there is now a worsening shortage of donor organs with the waiting list of potential recipients having doubled in the last 10 years, whereas the number of organs available for donation has increased by only 1%. Dr Atala talked about his research team and the work they have done in organ regeneration using tissue grown in the laboratory transplanted into animals and finally into humans. He talked about the problems and how they preferentially used the patient's own organ cells to grow tissue and if not available autogenous material from bone marrow and lastly allogenic cells which produced tissue rejection. He showed how human cells could be grown to form a bladder, which could be surgically implanted into a patient.

The accompanying partners were met by Marlene Wong and Christina O'Shell and driven to Bayou Bend for a tour of the house, followed by lunch at the Backstreet Café. Later they joined the delegates for Mark Wong's talk on his journey to Houston after he was presented with the HSOMS Distinguished Service Award.

On Friday evening we all attended a reception at the Hotel with a buffet dinner which facilitated our mixing freely with our American colleagues and discussing their work, techniques and practices.

The following morning, Saturday May 2nd, Dr Marx lectured about the differential diagnosis of radiographic abnormalities, which included pathology and management of bony jaw pathology from fibrous dysplasia, ossifying fibroma, cherubim through to osteopetrosis.

Dr Chung Kau, an orthodontist, then spoke about cone beam CT technology and Dr Marx updated us on bone graft physiology and, after lunch, on the preparation of the jaws for dental implants. This was followed by our President Graham Wood, who gave a very comprehensive overview on the management of salivary gland disease.

Dr King Li, a radiologist, talked about molecular imaging and integration of imaging modalities to produce fusion images to identify pathological tissue to guide therapy, and Dr Denise Helgen, an obstetrician and gynaecologist with a dental qualification, talked about the use of magnetic resonance focused ultrasound to treat uterine fibroids obviating the need for hysterectomy.

Finally Dr Marx spoke about his current thoughts on bisphosphonates. He introduced the topic with the history and their mechanism of action. Dr Marx has personally seen 200 cases. He spoke about the politics of the drug companies and the oral and maxillofacial establishment and the efforts to initially deny a causal relationship and then to minimize it. He spoke about the management, which is largely conservative, and how he uses surgery for the most severe cases as pathological fractures. Finally he talked about osteoporosis and cast doubt on the benefit of oral bisphosphonates beyond 5 years of therapy.

The accompanying ladies were given a guided walking tour around the district of Montrose, visiting the Byzantine Chapel, Cy Twombly Gallery and Menil Collection, followed by lunch at Hugo's Restaurant.

After the meeting club members joined members of the committee of the Houston Society of Oral and Maxillofacial surgery and the faculty of the meeting at Ouisie's restaurant for dinner, where our President gave thanks and made a presentation of an engraved Quaich to commemorate the OSCGB visit to our host Mark Wong on our behalf.

On Sunday May 3rd the group visited the Johnson NASA Space Center some way out of Houston for a guided tour. We were able to see, in particular, the mission control room (as it was Sunday) and the laboratory where astronauts trained for space flight. Afterwards we visited Galveston on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and had an early dinner at Gaido's seafood restaurant before returning to the Hotel.

On Monday May 4th a group of four of us visited the Texas Medical Center, which is the largest conglomerate of healthcare facilities in the world. We visited the practice rooms of the faculty and were able to discuss some cases in a small seminar and receive and discuss a presentation concerning critical thinking and evidence based practice for the residents. After lunch we visited the dental school.