

A Note from the Chairman

Bill Holt. April 2007

2007 marks the 30th anniversary of the BAS, and so it is timely to look back over our achievements and to re-evaluate our current role as a scientific society. As it happens, along with other societies, the BAS is currently doing some soul searching (or navel gazing) about its role in the current scientific environment, and this is therefore a significant time to review our position. When we started, back in 1977, reproductive biology conferences focused heavily on female endocrinology. My impression at the time was that reproductive biology hardly involved males at all, although the organisers usually provided a couple of sperm sessions so that a few of us could present our work.

Nevertheless, a significant minority of people really were interested in the male, and so the BAS came into existence. Brian Setchell was a prime mover in this regard and wrote individually to many UK scientists, clinicians and vets suggesting that we form a British Andrology Group (which later changed its name to British Andrology Society). The formula for BAS meetings was established around that time, with an annual meeting spread across two half days, which included symposia with invited speakers together with submitted communications. In addition to the promotion of andrology as a science, the society gradually developed its role in quality control, training and influencing clinical policies and practices associated with human infertility and its treatment.

Times have changed, however, and andrology has changed too. It is manifestly clear that the BAS needs to monitor these changes and focus

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on what it does best. We no longer need to provide technical training in semen assessment, and we are much less involved in regulatory matters than was formerly the case. Our main strength is still in the science of andrology, and we still have the ability to organise high-level international conferences and workshops worthy of the best international speakers. This is a tradition that the society established in the early 1990s, under the Chairmanship of Chris Barratt, with a series of international workshops entitled “Advanced topics in andrology”. Our ability to maintain this tradition was emphasised recently when David Miller organised a successful workshop on spermatogenesis in Leeds in 2006 as an add-on to the annual meeting. This workshop concentrated on the basic science of spermatogenesis, and it is interesting to see how some of that work spills into diagnostic andrology by making links between male infertility and the role of sperm-borne RNA. There was even a controversial, but groundbreaking, paper proposing that spermatozoa can synthesise proteins.

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While David Miller's Leeds workshop attracted many delegates, including a respectable number from overseas, very few of these were actually BAS members. This was somewhat disappointing; on the other hand, the workshop could not easily have been organised without the support of BAS as an organisation. This lack of support from BAS members is partly explained by the fact that the total membership is now smaller than it used to be. In turn this probably reflects the changing scenario of research, where people are much less likely to see themselves as gamete biologists, or even as reproductive biologists, but to be working on specialised aspects such as signal transduction, genomics, proteomics. It is also the case that we nowadays consider physiological systems in a more holistic and integrated manner than before. Studying sperm function without considering embryonic development, spermatogenesis, or even behaviour, is now outdated. Instead, we must encompass every "omic" we can find and link everything together. It is therefore clear that the main role of the BAS must now be the continued provision of scientific information through its unsurpassed ability to set up high quality conferences. In doing this we need to acknowledge that the scientific world is changing and make sure our programmes deal with contemporary issues and questions. By this means, BAS members will thus remain at the forefront of their discipline and we will be able to retain members from a wider set of disciplines.

Bill Hot, BAS Chairman

A Message from the Treasurer

Membership fee increase

At our last annual general meeting in Leeds in November 2006, you, the membership made the decision to increase our annual fees. As you know, our membership fees are very modest compared to other learned Societies and we have not increased them for the past ten years. Now unfortunately, this year we had to request a small increase in order to keep our Society solvent. From this year, annual fees for ordinary and overseas membership are £25 and for student membership are £15 annually.

Society membership includes two newsletters to keep you up to date with the latest news in Andrology matters and allows you to apply for BAS Travel grants to support conference attendance. Membership also gives you access to the BAS annual conference and advanced workshops where you can meet with leading andrologists and have opportunities to set up new research collaborations. Next year, for the first time we are holding the annual BAS conference in Spain so you can combine work and pleasure! and also use the opportunity to make new contacts with Spanish andrologists. We also plan to include clinical Andrology sessions to interest those of our membership working in infertility clinics.

Sheena Lewis, BAS Treasurer



New Members

A warm welcome to all new members of BAS!

Charlene Booth (Leicester Fertility Centre, Susan Avery (Birmingham Women's Hospital)

Career Profile

Ann Atkinson

**National Health Service Career
1962 – 2007**

Let me give you a brief history into how Ann Atkinson became an Andrologist and the Organiser of the Andrology Scheme for External Quality Assurance. Ann started work in the NHS in 1962 at St Mary's Hospital, Manchester. She became a state registered Microbiologist in 1966. After completing further qualifications in Haematology and taking time out to have her children she was asked, in 1977, to return to work to run a new laboratory. Together with Joan Smith (another Biomedical Scientist), and Dr Jennison the Andrology laboratory was established. The Laboratory provided a diagnostic Andrology service. Later that year the first patient banked sperm for long term storage prior to cancer treatment; the Andrology laboratory at St Mary's now has one of the largest sperm banks in the UK. In that same year the donor sperm bank was also established. By 1985 four Andrologists were working in the laboratory. In 1990 Ann obtained an M.Sc from the University of Manchester on 'introducing staff appraisal in the NHS', and in 2000 the laboratories gained Clinical Pathology Accreditation (CPA).

In 1993, Dr Phil Matson the Consultant Embryologist, became interested in establishing an external quality assurance scheme for Andrology and asked if Ann would 'help' to set up a pilot scheme. At this point Ann became the Pilot Scheme Manager. No one could have foreseen the amount of work required from Ann and her staff or how big the scheme would become. In 1996 it became part of the UK National External Quality Assurance Scheme Organisation (UK NEQAS) and in 1998 Ann became the Scheme Organiser. This is

how the UK NEQAS Scheme for Andrology came into being. It started with only a handful of units. It is currently running 3 schemes: Semen Analysis, Sperm Motility and Sperm Antibodies. There are currently a total of 275 participants in the scheme from 3 different continents and the scheme is going from strength to strength. Ann and her staff also initiated and have run since 2000 semen analysis training days to assist participants.

In 2004 Ann retired from the NHS but stayed on as the UK NEQAS for Andrology Organiser in order to acquire CPA accreditation for the scheme. On the 31st of March 2007, Ann decided that there was life away from Andrology and stepped down as Organiser, ending an NHS career lasting more than 40 years. We have worked with Ann for many of these years and on behalf of the Department of Reproductive Medicine, we would like to pay tribute to her. Ann was a never-to-be-forgotten personality! She was consistently one of the hardest working people in the Department. She always had time to talk, whether it was on the subject of Andrology, the shortcomings of various consultants with whom she came into contact, or her grandchildren. She was never slow at coming forward and expressing her opinions and was a powerful force promoting the role of Andrology in our department. Andrologists throughout the UK also owe Ann a debt of gratitude. Without her perseverance with the NEQAS scheme you might still be thinking you were doing a good job, without even knowing for sure!

We would all like to thank Ann for putting 'Quality into Andrology'.

Greg Horne, Laboratory Manager for Embryology and Andrology
Kathy Cumming, UK NEQAS Scheme Manager
Daniel Brison, Consultant Embryologist and Scientific Director
Department of Reproductive Medicine, St Mary's Hospital, Manchester.

Update your email address

The BAS is increasingly using email to contact members with news and important announcements. However, we do not have an email address for all the society's members and suspect that some of the addresses we have are out of date. Please use the opportunity of this year's membership renewal form to the secretariat to update your details or email secretary@britishandrology.org.uk.



News from the Society

2008 BAS AGM

The 2008 BAS AGM will be held in North West Spain. The meeting will be a joint meeting with AERA, with the BAS meeting on one of the days with AERA's on the other.

BAS Student

At the BAS there are plenty of benefits for students and this year there is plenty to look forward to:

- Annual student membership of the BAS for a fee of just £15
- Travel grants up to the value of £250
- BAS Conference offering you discounted registration, a student oral communication prize and a student lunch to meet your fellow BAS peers.

Application forms can be downloaded from:

www.britishandrology.org.uk

Travel Grants

BAS Travel Grants are available to members for travel to national and international conferences.

If you would like to apply for a travel grant, complete the travel grant application form which can be downloaded from our website at:

www.britishandrology.org.uk/BAS/Travel%20Grants.htm

Then return the application to the BAS Treasurer, Professor Sheena Lewis (s.e.lewis@qub.ac.uk). Applications are assessed in April and September..

To qualify for an award:

- You must have been a BAS member for at least one year, or a student member for six months
- You must not have received a BAS travel award for two years
- The maximum award value per application is £250
- Applicants that actively participate at the conference (i.e. present a paper or poster) will be viewed favourably
- Successful applicants will be required to write a report on the conference attended for the BAS newsletter

Applicants are asked to acknowledge on posters and presentations funding from the British Andrology Society.

BAS AGM

BAS Annual Meeting, Ware, Hertfordshire

15-16 November 2007

Toxic Hurdles in Male Reproductive Success

The British Andrology Society annual meeting 2007 will be held at GlaxoSmithKline, Park Road, Ware, SG12 0DP, Hertfordshire on the afternoon of Thursday 15 November and morning of Friday 16 November.

PROGRAMME

Theme of the meeting will be toxic hurdles in male reproductive success and will include:

- Male reproductive health and the environment (Niels Skakkebaek, Richard Sharpe, Phillipa Saunders)
- Development of new pharmaceuticals and male reproductive safety assessment (Chris Powell, Richard Clark)
- ReProTech project overview and progress (Axel Themman, Anne Tilloy-Ellul)
- Oral free communications
- Poster session
- Postgradoc prize
- Student career opportunities workshop
- BAS AGM
- Conference dinner

The meeting will provide the opportunity to meet colleagues and peers in an informal setting as well as at the conference dinner.

A draft programme can be downloaded from www.britishandrology.org.uk/BAS/Meeting.htm.

REGISTRATION

Registration is now open. Please complete the online application form that can be downloaded from: www.britishandrology.org.uk/BAS/Meeting.htm.

ABSTRACTS

Abstracts should be submitted to Jacqui Piner at jacqui.a.piner@gsk.com.

For any information please contact local organiser jacqui.a.piner@gsk.com.

Forthcoming Meetings

2007

23rd Annual Meeting of the ESHRE

1 - 4 July, 2007

Lyon, France

Tel: +32 (0)2 269 09 69

Fax +32 (0)2 269 56 00

E-mail: info@eshre.com

Web:

www.eshre.com/emc.asp?pageld=206

International Meeting of Urology – FFFCMPA

Porto Alegre, RS – Brazil

August 23-25, 2007

Sheraton Hotel

Email: urologyteloken@yahoo.com

The First International Workshop on Biology of Fish Sperm

August 29-31 2007

Vodnany, Czech Republic

For further information contact: Prof.

Otomar Linhart

Tel: +420 383 382 402

Fax: +420 383 382 396

E-Mail: linhart@vurh.jcu.cz

Wellcome Trust Conference: Mouse Molecular Genetics

5-9 September 2007

Wellcome Trust Conference Centre,

Wellcome Trust Genome Campus,

Hinxton, Cambridge, UK

Contact: Pam Garland, Event Organiser

Telephone: 01223 495000

E-Mail: wtmeetings@wtconference.org.uk

British Andrology Society Annual Meeting 2007

15–16 November 2007

GlaxoSmithKline, Ware, Hertfordshire

Web:

www.britishandrology.org.uk/BAS/Meeting.htm

Forthcoming Meetings Cont.

2008

ASA 33rd Annual Conference

April 12-15, 2008

Hyatt Regency Albuquerque

Albuquerque, NM

Abstract Submissions: August 1-
November 1, 2007

Web: www.andrologysociety.com

10th European Congress of Endocrinology

3 - 7 May, 2008

Dresden, Germany

Web: www.euro-endo.org

2009

11th European Congress of Endocrinology

25 - 29 April, 2009

Istanbul, Turkey

Web: www.euro-endo.org

PF Watson Retirement Symposium The Royal Veterinary College Wednesday 5 September 2007

“Cryobiology and its contribution to Reproductive Science”

Confirmed speakers include:

Prof Stanley Leibo, New Orleans, USA, Prof Chis Maxwell, University of Sydney, Australia. Prof. Bill Holt, (London) Prof Stuart Milligan (London), Dr Alireza Fazeli (Sheffield) and Dr Mark Curry (Lincoln)

For further information contact Nana Satake
nsatake@rvc.ac.uk.

Jobs

Postdoctoral Positions in Genome Reprogramming, Computational Biology and Male Reproductive Systems



The Krawetz group <http://compbio.med.wayne.edu>, is using the human protamine gene cluster as a model of chromatin mediated genome reprogramming and RNA delivery by sperm as a model of early paternal effect genome reprogramming. We have directed our studies toward defining how gene loci are selected for expression. Characterizing this mechanism, which is mediated by the opening of chromatin domains, is fundamental to understanding the first step in the selective expression of our genome. This is currently being explored at the genome-wide systems level.

Several positions are currently available as part of an interdisciplinary research team using advanced FISH, Microarray, Real-Time and Computational technologies to determine how chromatin structure and RNA reprogram our genome. Self-motivated individuals trained in molecular biology, genetics, biochemistry computer science, bioinformatics or the reproductive sciences are especially encouraged to apply.

Applicants should forward their curriculum vitae and three letters of reference to: Professor S. A. Krawetz, C.S. Mott Center for Human Growth and Development, Wayne State University School of Medicine, 275 E. Hancock, Detroit, MI 48201. **E-mail:** steve@compbio.med.wayne.edu. WSU is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

British Andrology Society

Executive Committee

<i>Chairman</i>	Prof Bill Holt	Institute of Zoology
<i>Treasurer</i>	Prof Sheena Lewis	Queen's University Belfast
<i>Secretary</i>	Dr Alireza Fazeli	University of Sheffield
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Dr Rez Prathalingham	Newcastle Fertility Centre
<i>Student Rep</i>	Ms Vicky Sharp	Royal Veterinary College
<i>Member</i>	Dr Iwan Lewis-Jones	Liverpool Women's Hospital
<i>Member</i>	Dr Jacqui Piner	GlaxoSmithKline
<i>Member</i>	Dr David Miller	University of Leeds

Letters

The BAS Newsletter is published in Spring and Autumn of each year.

If you wish to contribute to the newsletter please write to us with your news and views to:

secretary@britishandrology.org.uk

Membership

Dr Alireza Fazeli

BAS Membership Secretary
Academic Unit of Reproductive & Developmental Medicine
University of Sheffield
Jessop Wing, Level 4
Tree Root Walk
Sheffield, S10 2SF

Email: a.fazeli@sheffield.ac.uk

Newsletter Editor

Dr Rez Prathalingham

BAS Newsletter Editor
Newcastle Fertility Centre
International Centre for Life
Central Parkway
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
NE1 2XBT

Email: n.prathalingham@ncl.ac.uk