

NEWS FROM THE BCS

The British Cardiovascular Society: an overview



Welcome to the first of a regular series of news and reviews from the British Cardiovascular Society (BCS). Many of you will already be BCS members and so the Society felt our readers would be interested in a regular update on BCS activities. In this first column, Dr Charles Knight, Honorary Secretary of the BCS, gives an overview of the Society and its role in advancing cardiovascular medicine in the UK.

Founded in 1922, the BCS has developed over the years into a complex organisation that plays a pivotal role in the delivery of cardiovascular health across the UK. There are currently over 2,100 members of the BCS and membership is growing steadily to include the overwhelming majority of UK cardiologists and many other professionals with an interest in cardiovascular medicine. Our members include non-clinical scientists, cardiac surgeons, nurses, technicians and primary care physicians. We have over 300 trainee members and currently

offer great value joint membership for BCS with the British Junior Cardiologists' Association.

BCS aims to support and represent all those working in the fields of cardiovascular care and research.

To help achieve this aim, BCS is affiliated with 17 unique organisations that work in various specific areas of cardiovascular medicine, health and patient care. In addition to BCS members, there are now over 8,000 members of these affiliated groups who are all associate members of the BCS. Together with our affiliated groups, BCS shares a mission to improve care for patients with cardiovascular disease and to provide a powerful voice for UK cardiovascular health care professionals.

The BCS is organised into several divisions: Education and Research, Clinical Standards, Corporate and Financial Affairs, and Training.

The Executive and Board of the BCS is outlined in the box. BCS Council has wider representation with both directly elected and regional members and representatives of affiliated groups.

The BCS is a charitable organisation and the President, Vice-Presidents and Executive all serve in a voluntary capacity. The BCS is run for and with its members: our staff manage the day to day running of the organisation, but the strategic direction of the Society is set by the members who volunteer their time to take on posts in our Executive, Board and Committees and throughout our Annual Conference.

Links with other bodies

We continue to strengthen our links with the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) and with the American College of Cardiology (ACC). British cardiology is well represented within the Board of the ESC and key ESC committees. Senior members of the ESC participate in our Annual Conference, and many BCS members have contributed to ESC guidelines. Our links with the ACC are strong. We are now twinned

with the California Chapter of the ACC and this provides access to very high quality courses and short-term attachments, 'preceptorships'. The pilot phase of this programme was initiated in 2009 and we aim to develop and expand these educational opportunities. A BCS/ACC Fellowship has been appointed and is underway in advanced imaging with six months in the US at Cedars Sinai Hospital, Los Angeles, and six months in the UK (at the Royal Brompton Hospital, London, for the first fellowship).

The BCS has also been active in its collaborative work with the Royal College of Physicians, the Department of Health, the British Heart Foundation and with other medical societies.

Education and Research Division

BCS is uniquely positioned to deliver high quality education mapped to the cardiology curriculum. With the development of revalidation, it is also important that we support our members with an educational programme that not only fulfils the needs of revalidation but ensures we all maintain our knowledge, skills and professionalism throughout our careers in cardiovascular medicine. An education strategy tailored to these needs underpins the aspirations of the BCS to promoting excellence in cardiovascular care. The planning and delivery of the Annual Conference has now been integrated into a broader education strategy in conjunction with our affiliated groups designed primarily to facilitate delivery of high quality education for our trainees and all our members.

Organised by Iain Simpson and the Programme Committee, the Annual Conference in Manchester in June 2010 was highly successful with a record number of delegates. Content included 'Educational Spotlight' sessions, themed 'Imaging Council' sessions and a popular top 10 trials session. The British Heart Foundation helped

Board of the BCS

BCS Executive:

Professor Keith Fox
President

Dr Charles Knight
Honorary Secretary

Dr Iain Simpson
Vice-President Education and Research

Dr Simon Ray
Vice-President Clinical Standards

Professor Derek Yellon
Vice-President Corporate and Financial Affairs

Dr Jim Hall
Vice-President Training

Dr Mark De Belder
President of BCIS (British Cardiovascular Intervention Society)

Dr Edward Rowland
President of HRUK (Heart Rhythm UK)

Dr Nav Masani
President of BSE (British Society of Echocardiography)

Dr Bernard Prendergast
Honorary Secretary Elect

Dr Sarah Clarke
Vice-President Education and Research Elect

Non-Executive Trustees
Professor Dame Carol Black
Mr Graham Meek
Mr Nigel Turner
Mr John Carrier

facilitate a linked, basic science track in the conference through association with the British Atherosclerosis Society and the British Society for Cardiovascular Research.

This year saw the inclusion of a full national training day for SpRs which will be a regular event at the BCS Annual Conference and will be integrated with a second national training day in the autumn. These national training days will provide a rolling programme of educational activities linked to the areas of the curriculum where it is more suitable to provide quality education on a national basis and also to ensure aspects of professionalism, which may be difficult to provide on a local or regional basis, are adequately covered.

Manchester is our most popular venue and we have committed to go there for the next two years.

The Cardiology Review Course

The Cardiology Review Course is a partnership between the British Cardiovascular Society and the Mayo Clinic, (with the courses run in association with the Royal College of Physicians of London). The first course in 2009 involved 80 participants and this was substantially expanded in 2010 (more than 260 registered) with many participants coming from abroad. The Cardiology Review Course is recognised for the exceptional quality and very high calibre of the contributors and will continue to be a major part of our educational strategy.

Clinical Standards Division

Revalidation

Led by Dr David Hackett, the outgoing Vice-President for Clinical Standards, BCS has been proactive in developing tools for revalidation, consistent with the requirements of the General Medical Council and the needs of the

profession. The aim is to develop a flexible and 'user friendly' approach to revalidation that meets professional needs in terms of knowledge, skills and assessment and an approach that minimises duplication.

BCS Imaging Council

BCS has established an Imaging Council with representation from all the cardiac imaging sub-specialties. During 2009, Dr Simon Ray as Vice-President Elect has chaired the Imaging Council meetings. The purpose of the Imaging Council is to improve cardiac imaging services in the UK, to raise the profile of cardiac imaging and improve links with international organisations. In addition, it will develop imaging training and provide coordinated and consistent advice to the Specialist Advisory Committee in Cardiology (SAC) and other groups responsible for training

Fitness to Fly

BCS established a Working Group on Fitness for Air Travel with Cardiovascular Conditions chaired by Dr David Smith, which has recently produced an excellent and comprehensive report now available on the BCS website.

Access to Cardiac Care

BCS with the British Heart Foundation and the Cardiovascular Coalition commissioned a study to establish the current provision of cardiac procedures compared with estimated need and to predict estimated future needs up to 2020. The Report was published and presented to the Annual Conference in June 2009 and can be found on the BCS website. Detailed local authority data was subsequently published in July 2009. These data will help in the development of local and regional services. Data from the Access to Cardiac Care study has also provided guidance on the need for cardiac and cardiac surgical interventions by locality and region of the UK up to 2020. BCS is analysing the corresponding need for cardiac catheterisation laboratories, consultant cardiologists, and trainees required for these procedure-based disciplines.

Training Division

The main activities of the division continue to overlap with those of the SAC, which was chaired by Professor Stuart Cobbe, (the outgoing Vice President for Training), until June 2010 and is now chaired by Dr Jim Hall. BCS has a major influence in determining SAC Policy. The SAC has roles (amongst others) in setting the cardiology



BCS is based at 9 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 5HW, a fine listed Adam town house, dating from 1790 in central London. The society can be contacted on enquiries@bcs.com. Its web address is: www.bcs.com

curriculum, organising national ST3 recruitment and in advising Postgraduate Medical Education Training Board (PMETB) on the quality of Postgraduate Medical Education in Cardiology.

Cardiology Curriculum

The 2007 Cardiology Curriculum has been revised to bring it fully into line with PMETB requirements. The revised curriculum now includes reference to generic areas of good medical practice, communication, medical leadership and a greater emphasis on public health issues. The updated curriculum will be operational for trainees entering Specialty Registrar posts at ST3 level in August 2010.

Knowledge-Based Assessment

The first Knowledge-Based Assessment (KBA) in Cardiology was held during the BCS Annual Conference in Manchester for trainees in the third year of Specialty Training (ST5). This consists of a single Multiple Choice examination of 120 best-of-five questions to test knowledge of the Core Curriculum. The examination is computer-based, and includes interpretation of ECGs, echocardiograms and other imaging modalities. The KBA is part of a European project, which may ultimately lead to a Europe-wide knowledge assessment. Supported by the ESC, it is dependent on the efforts of an international question-setting group, chaired by Dr Nick Brooks. As a result of the initiatives developed by BCS, the KBA has the distinction of being the cheapest speciality exam in the UK!

As you can see the BCS is a busy and active organisation which we believe is making a real contribution to enhancing cardiovascular care and training. However, BCS is only as strong as its membership - so please get involved. If you'd like to know more, please e-mail the Honorary Secretary at enquiries@bcs.com.

A simulator to practice the technique of transoesophageal echocardiography created much interest at the annual conference

