CONFERENCE REPORT

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SWAN XIII Trauma Conference
29-30 July 2005, Sydney, Australia

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Keywords

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The South Western Sydney Area Health Network held its 13th Annual Trauma Conference (SWAN) in Sydney this year. It was hosted by the enigmatic Liverpool Hospital Director of Trauma Services, Michael Sugrue. The conference attracted approximately 300 registrants, including a national and international faculty of over 40 experts in trauma care. It was aimed at health professionals from the whole spectrum of trauma care - from roadside to rehabilitation.

Over 60 sessions were offered to registrants over the two day conference. These included individual topics, case scenarios, a debate, posters and free papers. Most sessions were plenary except for 13 free papers, which ran concurrently. All presenters were given a strict time constraint of 10 minutes for individual topics, and this was light-heartedly enforced by physical removal from the stage. Audience participation was encouraged at all times. During the breaks trade displays were set up by the various sponsors which provided space for people to meet with speakers and other registrants.

The speakers covered topics such as; patient safety, clinical updates, special issues and problems in trauma, battlefield trauma and the challenges that disasters pose. The International Faculty comprised of 7 speakers; Bill Schwab, Christine Cocanour, Gage Ochner, Jim Haan from the USA, Martin Heetveld from the Netherlands, Teodoro Herbosa from the Philippines, Tim Hodgetts from the UK and Carlos Mesquita from Portugal - all of who had a plethora of experience and training in trauma care and disaster management.

Discussions in patient safety issues included a session by Tim Hodgetts to compare medical practice standards to other industries, and explore possible solutions that could, and are being implemented around the world to help change the culture of blame in medicine. Other topics included accreditation, and the reality of our trauma system in Australia.

Clinical updates included the Statscan x-ray, hypertonic solutions and artificial haemoglobin, perfusion monitoring in traumatic brain injury, stenting in trauma, management of blunt splenic injury and advances in the management of trauma in the rural setting. Tim Hodgetts presented the findings of the Swedish Tsunami Commission and discussed how it could have been managed differently to assist both their countrymen and the locals living in Tsunami affected areas.

Special issues and problems in trauma were presented by a number of speakers. Topics included a very interesting session by Bill Schwab on brain death and organ harvesting in trauma in relation to the changing demographics and implications of this patient group. Other issues included;

- prehospital intubation and difficult airways,
- intraosseous IV cannulation and its uses,
- chest tubes,
- communication styles and education of doctors, and;
- the power of prayer and religion for patients.

Presented topics in battlefield trauma included;

- forward surgical units and the changes in modern warfare,
- blast injuries,
- an overview of the London bombing,
- damage control surgery,
- new advances in haemorrhage control, and;
- the implications of military advances for civilians.

Finally, the issues discussed under the topic of 'challenges that disasters pose', included;

- what happens when your hospital is immobilised by flooding,
- surgery in tsunamis and the responders' attributes,
- the role of surgeons in disaster training and education in Asia, and;
- nursing in austere environments.

Topics presented over the two days tried to cater for all the different groups of medical professionals that attended the days. It was of benefit to be exposed to the advances in trauma care and management for the patient due to the changing global environment from terrorism and war, and advances in medicine, changing the quality and longevity of our population.

As the numbers were reasonably small, the conference had quite an intimate feel, which was conducive to audience participation. Networking enabled a great sharing of experiences and ideas, leading to some very constructive debates and differing opinions.

The SWAN XIV Trauma Conference for 2006 will be held in Sydney on July 28th to 29th, with confirmed international speakers including; Ari Leppaniemi from Finland, Cathy Robinson and David Hoyt from USA, Jo Ollerton from UK, John Kontbeek from Canada and Salvador Massada from Portugal. The topics planned for inclusion in next year's conference are; latest trauma care, trauma nursing, international radiology, better practice and safety and penetrating trauma.

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