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Vertical Transmission



Prof John Turnidge

President ASM

After a very successful scientific meeting in Sydney, it is good to reflect that the world of microbes is anything but dull and boring! The quality and diversity of the speakers and the material presented is a credit to the National Scientific Advisory Committee and the Local Organising Committee. You may have noticed (in a way we hope you didn't) but we went into the meeting without our in-house conference organiser, Janette Sofronidis. Sadly for us, Janette left the ASM in May after 10 years of outstanding service. The Society would like to thank her for the great contribution she made to our meetings over this period and wish her well in her future endeavours. Because the professional conference organiser (PCO) industry in Australia is now mature and highly competitive, the Executive has elected not to replace Janette, but rather to outsource the organisational aspects of our annual meeting to a PCO, and in the not too distant future, through a tendering process.

Speaking of the annual meeting, you would be aware of the recent proposal to go to a second-yearly large meeting, with small specialist meetings in the intervening years. Opinion is still divided on this, despite the strong support given it during the indicative email ballot sent out in May. The Executive and Council have agreed that they will continue to examine the feasibility of this idea, but in the meantime the normal yearly meeting will continue in its current format.

I would like to take the opportunity to personally thank Hatch Stokes, our President for the last two years. Hatch has made a major contribution to the Society over the last seven years and during his Presidency has shown the kind of leadership we could only hope to emulate. His time has been filled with unexpected challenges, all of which he has managed with great aplomb. Thank you, Hatch.

So what else for the future? Like many learned societies at the moment, the ASM fights to maintain its membership. Perhaps one way to attract membership is to have more 'product', items that bring the membership to the website, for instance. *Microbiology Australia* is obviously one such product, and in the hands of our current Editor is a superb example of a 'product' of this type. The idea of having a Society journal of some kind has waxed and waned over the years. Writing guidelines and 'consensus' documents often works for other organisations, and maybe there are some that could be created by ASM members. The Culture Media SIG has been active in this area. We have many other enthusiastic SIGs and divisions, so I am hoping that they or you can come up with some ideas and suggestions for creating more 'product' that will help to promote the goals of the ASM. All ideas are welcome!

Finally, I would like to note the unexpected passing on 2 August of Ian Holmes, an outstanding virologist formerly for the University of Melbourne, and recently made a Life Member of ASM for his contribution over many years. Amongst other things, Ian was instrumental in discovering the human rotavirus in the early 1970s, wielding his electron microscope (see Bishop RF, Davidson GP, Holmes IH, Ruck BJ. (1973) Virus particles in epithelial cells of duodenal mucosa from children with acute non-bacterial gastroenteritis. *Lancet*. 2(7841):1281-3). Our thoughts go to his wife Jeni. A more detailed obituary will appear in a future edition of *MA*.