

UKEMS: MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUGHBOROUGH

6 JULY 2004

1. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 26 AUGUST, 2003 AT THE AECC, ABERDEEN

The minutes were reviewed and agreed by the membership.

2. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Andrew Collins first congratulated Don Jones and Karen Brown on organising an excellent meeting. He then indicated that planning was well advanced for next years meeting in Bradford. Last year was dominated by our hosting of the EEMS in Aberdeen but this year we have focussed on domestic issues such as the new website (thanks to Eileen Waters and Tom Phillips), also the UKEMS qualifications. Andrew indicated that he was glad to Jim back on his feet, undeterred by his illness. Jim has led an initiative to develop a training course leading to a professional qualification in Genetic Toxicology at different levels, suitable for non-graduate students and technicians as well as graduates. The society has been concerned with the need for OECD guidelines on the use of the COMET assay in assessing the safety of chemicals and pharmaceuticals, so that it can be accepted as a routine test for regulatory purposes. There is still a need for standardisation of procedures and some validation exercises. Brian Burlinson is to hold a workshop on Wednesday afternoon to discuss the way forward.

Andrew then went on to say something about the special interest groups and suggested that people belong to UKEMS for different reasons. For those working in the industrial sector, concerned with checking novel compounds for potentially harmful effects, mutation is a convenient endpoint indicating possible carcinogenicity. The Industrial Genotoxicology Group (IGG) exists to meet their needs. Another set of UKEMS members working in the biomedical field are interested in the influence of mutations, or polymorphisms, on disease risk, or the information that mutations in tumours can give about the origin of the disease. For them, the Molecular Epidemiology Group (MEG) provides a focus within UKEMS. Then there are those whose research is into fundamental mechanisms of Mutagenesis, from DNA damage to genome change. One of the key players is DNA repair and UKEMS has frequently included this topic in its meeting programme, and several times has run joint meetings with the DNA Repair Network. So it is very appropriate that the Network has now applied to become affiliated to UKEMS in the same way as the IGG and MEG.

Andrew finished by saying that as he stepped down as President, that he would like to thank the members of the committee for their unfailing support, and to remind you of the enormous amount of work done by our treasurer, Anthony Lynch, and secretary, Peter Jenkinson. He indicated that this work is mostly unseen, but without their efforts, UKEMS would not be the successful society it is today.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer presented the interim accounts for 2004 and the main points were as follows:

- The UKEMS Membership 2003 stands at 10 Fellows, 218 Full Members and 74 Student Members making a total of 302.

- The Financial status (as of July, 2004) was a total of **£56,753**. The detailed figures are given at the end of these minutes.
- The society now has 9 Sustaining Members, namely:
AstraZeneca, Covance, GlaxoSmithKline, Huntingdon Life Sciences, Kinetic Imaging, Perspective Instruments, SafePharm Laboratories, Syngenta CTL and Unilever.

AL was still awaiting the final accounts from Aberdeen before the accounts can be audited. He informed the membership that he had opened a CAF cheque account that would earn more interest than the existing Lloyds account. He reminded the membership of the bursaries and awards that are available for members of the society and details are given on the new website.

3.1 Motion to increase the membership fee from £20 to £30 if paid by cheque.

AL proposed a motion to increase the membership fee from £20 to £30 if paid by cheque, the reason being the high costs associated with cashing the cheques and chasing those that had not paid. Alison Wolfreys seconded the proposal and a vote taken, no votes were cast against and a large majority were in favour. There were 4 abstentions.

Jim Parry indicated that he was concerned about the new award that the committee had announced, i.e. the travel and subsistence award for mature scientists. However, the executive committee considered that the constitution allowed them to do this and that they were only doing what the AGM had requested previously, that is, to spend more of the societies' money.

4. MUTAGENESIS EDITOR'S REPORT

David Phillips reported on the current status of the journal and on current trends concerning subscriptions, etc. The impact factor is virtually unchanged at 1.82 and the factor compared favourably with that of other similar journals. The usage of the journal is increasing and the total number of internet downloads of full copies has more than doubled that of 2002-2003 and this figure has already been exceeded in 2004 so far. The journal will soon be accepting online submissions, which is quite a bold move for a relatively small journal such as ours and this will cause a slight change in the editorial process. Back issues of the journal are to be archived and will be accessible online. Next year there will be a move to introduce electronic publishing ahead of print. Abstracts of this meeting will be published later this year. Jim Parry asked about how the 3rd world countries get access to OUP journals. DP suggested that there is a process by which 'poor' countries can apply to OUP but he will check on the details. A question was asked about when will online submission begin and DP answered that it will go live in a few weeks time, as soon as the other editors have had a little practise.

5. IGG CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Alison Wolfreys told the meeting that they had held a very successful meeting in 2004 with 61 attendees. The subject had proven very popular and had attracted people from outside of Genetic Toxicology. They had also organised a session at the Aberdeen meeting, which had covered several topics. The group is organising a session at the Loughborough meeting but their next solo meeting is to be held in December but the date and topic are to be announced. Julie Clements and Nick Edwards had both finished their periods of office and the committee wished to express their gratitude to them both for their input over the last few years. Mike Kelly had resigned from the committee because of other commitments. The committee now included Phil Clay, Mick Fellows, Carol Beevers and Patricia Collins. The finances of the group were sound and the current balance in the bank account is >£2000.

6. MEG CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The EEMS meeting held in Aberdeen on 24th to 28th August included a session on Molecular Epidemiology organised by MEG. The session was in two parts with speakers including Mike Stratton, John Groopman, Chris Wild, Gillian Smith and a number of short papers selected from submitted abstracts. The sessions were well attended and feedback from attendees was positive.

The one day meeting planned for 4th December 2003 on "**Drugs and Adverse Reactions: an interface for molecular toxicology, epidemiology and the pharmaceutical industry**" had to be cancelled because of a lack of registrants. This meeting had already been re-arranged from the previous May because of the same problem. The aim had been to put on a meeting that would appeal to people from the pharmaceutical industry but despite widespread publicity we were unfortunately not successful in this. The Committee would nevertheless like to acknowledge the financial support that had been promised from Astrazeneca and GlaxoSmithKline for this meeting.

There will be a meeting in Cumbria from the 15-17th September with the title "**Molecular Epidemiology and the Assessment of Chronic Disease Risk**". This international meeting has an excellent set of speakers and aims to identify how novel biochemical and genetic markers may contribute to risk assessment of chronic diseases. The conference should bring together people from a wide range of disciplines including basic laboratory scientists, epidemiologists, public health workers and those on the regulatory side of risk assessment. Registration and submission of abstracts are open until 13th August. UKEMS has committed £5,000 to the meeting with a further £2,500 available from the British Association for Cancer Research from their last meeting. Additional sponsorship has been obtained from Cancer Research UK (£1200) and the Association for International Cancer Research (£500).

An exciting development this year for MEG has been the discussions with the Society of Social Medicine (SSM). The SSM is the society to which most epidemiologists belong in the UK and consequently much of the activity of MEG will be of interest to SSM members. The MEG and SSM Committees have agreed to a joint one-day meeting to be held in May 2005 in Leeds. The topic will be "Genes, Populations and Disease: proteomics and genomics in epidemiological studies."

The MEG AGM was held on 4th December 2004 at the Mary Sumner House in London. At the meeting Professor Julian Little from the Department of Epidemiology, University of Aberdeen joined the Committee and replaced Dr Sheila Bingham. The Committee thanked Sheila for her many years of support to MEG, which was of great value and much appreciated by her colleagues.

This years MEG AGM will take place in Cumbria during the meeting mentioned above. This year three people will leave the Committee. Professors Peter Fanner and Ann Daly have been members of the MEG Committee since its inception in 1996 and Peter was Chair of MEG from 1998-2001. Both Peter and Ann have been instrumental in developing MEG and have given of their time and expertise generously throughout; the Committee would like to record its thanks to both for their commitment. In addition to Peter and Ann reaching the end of their

terms of office, Julian Little has unfortunately had to resign from the Committee after just one year because he has accepted a post in Ottawa.

These departures mean that there are three places available on the Committee from this September and members will shortly be receiving notice to propose new members. If necessary a ballot will be held over the summer.

Remaining Committee members are as follows: Chairperson: Chris Wild; Treasurer: Lesley Rushton; Secretary: David Phillips. Jenny Duckmanton continues to provide excellent administrative support to the Committee.

MEG continues to be represented in discussions about development of a European Molecular Epidemiology Group (EUROMEG) by Professor Peter Farmer and further discussions are expected at a meeting in Finland this month.

MEG has a healthy balance in the account of around £3000. Some of these funds may be called on to underwrite the meeting in Cumbria, if necessary, and this course of action has been approved by the UKEMS Committee.

7. ELECTIONS FOR ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS, TREASURER & VICE PRESIDENT – ratification of the results

Steve Dean was ratified as the Vice President and Anthony Lynch was ratified as the Treasurer for his second term of office. Two new ordinary committee members were ratified after the results of an election. Paul Carmichael and Melvyn Lloyd had received more votes than the other two candidates, Awadesh Jha and Michael Routledge.

8. NEW UKEMS WEBSITE

Tom Phillips gave a brief introduction to the new website, www.ukems.org, and described how to obtain a password. He also showed several representative screenshots. Jim Parry suggested that perhaps a better image was needed for the header of the home page.

9. MOTION FOR THE AFFILIATION OF THE DNA REPAIR NETWORK TO THE UKEMS

Andrew Collins proposed the motion and presented the argument for the affiliation of the Network and invited Chris Jones to address the meeting before a vote on the motion. Chris described the history of the network and informed that the Network was likely to change its name to the Genome Stability Network. This was designed to widen the appeal of the group. The annual meeting will be reinstated and the next one will be in Cambridge around Christmas time. Some comments were made about the proposed name change. The motion was seconded by Anthony Lynch and a vote was taken. There were no votes against, 2 abstentions and a large majority in favour.

10. UKEMS QUALIFICATIONS: current status and future plans

Jim Parry gave a PowerPoint presentation on the UKEMS qualifications and informed that a meeting had been held in Swansea in February. There were to be three different qualifications taken on a modular basis:

- Certificate – 60 credits
- Diploma – 100 credits
- Masters – 180 credits including a research project

Every student will be allocated a tutor who will be available by email. The course will make use of existing modules in use at other universities and each module will take 2 to 5 days to complete. Modules will be delivered across the UK from centres at Swansea, Alderley Park, Harrogate, Ware, etc and also perhaps from a centre in mainland Europe such as Brussels. The course contents will be provided on CD and pre-course materials will be made available and in due course perhaps a UKEMS textbook will be published. Various things need to be done, as follows:

- Finalise the course content
- Get university recognition, hopefully by spring 2005
- Feedback on levels of interest in the course
- Feedback from volunteers (to be paid) for specific modules, etc.
- Information of existing material that can be utilised as modules

Other options include mixing modules for specific audiences and expansion of the management committee to include a wider range of industrial expertise. David Kirkland suggested that there may be members interested in contributing to the effort but who not at the AGM. PJ agreed to email the membership accordingly.

11. BRADFORD 2005

Peter Jenkinson presented some news of next years meeting, which is to be held in Bradford, in Martin Brinkworths absence. The date of the meeting is July and is to be held back to back with an international symposium on male-mediated genotoxicity.

12. AOB

Ian Mitchell used this opportunity to thank Andrew Collins for all of his efforts in the previous 2 years. He was also glad to see that the society had had to have an election and saw this as a sign of good health that so many people wished to be on the committee and he urged people to continue this in the future and to use their votes.