

3 TESLA



Spin Down Under



My eighth grade math teacher's favorite saying was "Every dog has his day, but a dog with a broken tail has a weak-end!" He would also, with great frequency, compare things to a potato, as in "Algebraic Proofs are like potatoes, they are best cut up into small pieces." So in honor of Mr. Patterson, I would like to say that:

An ISMRM annual meeting is like a potato - there are many ways to prepare it, and as long as it's not half-baked, it's pretty good.

An ISMRM annual meeting is like a potato - it starch with good talks, great interactions - and everything else you put on top is just gravy.

Preparing an ISMRM annual meeting is like preparing potatoes for 6000 people - you need to be appealing for a long, long time.

You still with me? Good, because in this blog I want to talk about the plethora of decisions that get made for a meeting. We are going to make some big changes for Melbourne, which I will discuss in detail in a later blog (see the message from the chair) - but there are lots of other decisions, big and small, that have to be made, and lots (and lots) of concerns from all of you that have to be "thrown into the stew", as it were... So here, in no particular order, are some of the things we are considering, much of which has already been decided. Some are small potatoes, but some are tuber big to ignore:

Program Book: Are we ready to be without a printed program book? Two years ago we tried, and found out that we probably should have kept it. I think we still need one (we may always need one, but that's not up to me). Our plan is to handle this book like last year - you can order it when you sign up for the meeting if you want to, for a small extra fee, otherwise you won't get one. The format will be similar to what we had in Montreal (but with all-new abstracts!).

Electronic Alternatives to the Program Book: Clearly one thing we need to do is continue to work on the Electronic Program, both on the web and as a stand-alone app. We are making progress towards that end, and I can promise you that (1) our product should (in a couple months I'll say will) be better than last year and that (2) it won't be everything you want it to be. That will require the iPad 5. In the meantime, have you looked at the advanced itinerary builder for the 2011 Montreal meeting? It is still on the web, and if you log in, then go to "View

Session Overview,” it looks just like the program-at-a-glance, but you can search it, create an itinerary, and send results to your outlook or google calendar. It’s way cool, but I admit I never knew it could do all this. We’ll be making this more prominent for next year.

The USB Stick: As you may have noticed, we went from DVD to USB stick last year to give you the proceedings and program. We had two USB sticks, one for the weekend, one for the week. This resulted in some confusion; actually I have some funny stories about this. Well, funny to me. Anyway, for Melbourne there will be a single USB stick with the whole enchilada on it. Plus a lanyard!

Actually, Roberta nixed putting actual enchiladas on the USB, you’ll have to get them somewhere else. But the whole program and proceedings will be there.

The Meeting Bag: The meeting bag is becoming unnecessary, so we will not be giving one out at the meeting. We may have some very simple bags that you can use, but bring your own if you have a favorite. For you youngsters - you should have been at these meetings 20 years, ago - suede leather bags, with room for a solid 10 pounds of printed abstracts. And a padded shoulder strap, to free your hands while you drank your free cof- well, suffice it to say, those were the days.

“Asia Rooms”: As many of you know, the Asian MRI community is a small but rapidly growing contingent of MRI practice and research. As an international organization, the ISMRM wants to encourage their participation in our society and meetings. We hope to have a large number of colleagues from Asia come to Melbourne who have not been to an ISMRM meeting before, and are looking for ways to facilitate their meeting experience. Towards that end, we will have three rooms available in the evening - one each for China, Korea, and Japan (our three largest Asian contingents) - for them to discuss what’s going on in the meeting and network within their country. The details are still being worked out, but if you are interested in this, keep an eye out for details as we get closer to next May.

Clinical vs. Scientific Content: We have consistent feedback from some MD’s that the meeting is too technical, and consistent feedback from some PhD’s that the meeting is too clinical. There is merit to many of the individual comments, but - from where I sit - the people organizing the meeting try hard to keep strong components on both sides, and mix these two groups where they can. This, I think most of us agree, is part of the strength of the ISMRM.

Clinical Intensive Courses (CIC): Toward that goal of keeping a clinical/technical balance, the society has seen a drop in our MD membership from roughly 50% several years ago to roughly 30% in the last couple years. In an effort to recruit more clinical attendees to the meeting, we have been trying out the notion of the CIC to bring in people who want a more clinical focus. Honestly - I have lots of conflicting thoughts on how this should be done, but I agree with the general goal. One problem with the CIC has been that a separate registration was required to attend those courses, which became very confusing and upsetting to some. This year, we are keeping the CIC courses, but opening them up to all registrants at no extra charge, simplifying registration for everyone. I’m actually thinking of strongly suggesting to my (engineering) students that they find at least one and go to it, as this gives a motivation and perspective on their work that they won’t find at a typical engineering conference.

Having Courses at the Same Time as the Plenaries: One other thing we have done with the CIC is to have some courses at the same time as the Plenaries, particularly when the plenaries are at a fairly advanced level. Many of you feel that the plenaries should have nothing else against them, as they are the one time when we all get together. Very close to 50% of me agrees with that, while very close to 50% of me feels that the CIC courses will probably attract people who wouldn't go to the plenaries anyway. A good plenary attendance on a typical morning is 2000, so more than half the people aren't coming on any given morning anyway - why not give them something else to do? We are going to have morning CIC sessions again this year, but it's a discussion worth continuing, in my opinion.

Internet: Every year conference centers tell our staff that they can handle our internet needs, and every year our staff tells them that we will bring them down. This is always something that is looked at and discussed in detail (no need to tell Roberta to negotiate around that). For Melbourne? The only way that I can guarantee you that the internet will not go down is to not offer it in the first place. What I will say - and I'm really stupid to say this - is that I am told that this conference center appears to be better prepared for our internet needs than any other site to date. And you can take that qualified suggestion of a guarantee to the bank.

Gold Corporate Symposia Lunches: We will be putting 30 minutes after the symposia for people to get their lunches and get to the next sessions on time. To do this we will take away some time from the morning coffee break.

What to Do About Duplicate Abstracts: In reviewing abstracts, there are often multiple submissions which have very similar content. Other times, the content is remarkably similar to what was presented in prior meetings. Sometimes the AMPC catches these and rejects one or all of them, other times they slip through the cracks. I don't think it's an epidemic, and often this is a gray area. I also know it happens, and that it's very frustrating for people with rejected abstracts or who didn't get talks to see others in their place with two or more presentations on overly similar themes. The AMPC is becoming increasingly sensitized to this, and looking at ways to prevent this from happening. The first step is to encourage you to avoid submitting duplicate abstracts. The last step will be public humiliation. We are somewhere in the middle...

The Half-Day on Friday: Some people think the meeting should end Thursday night, others think we should meet for the whole day on Friday. We're not going to change this for Melbourne - perhaps you should share your thoughts on this with the next chair. :-) I will encourage you all to stay for the Friday morning sessions however - they are well worth your time!

Finally, a serious comment to each of you. You have invested, and continue to invest, a lot of time and energy in your career, and you deserve for this meeting to be perfect. It won't be. You may be passionate about what does not go right, or perhaps not. You may be in the minority on occasion, or you may share the majority opinion. We really try to be open to everyone's feedback, we make changes and see if they work, and we reverse changes when they don't work well. Please bear with us, and continue to give us feedback, when things go right or when they go wrong. And from the bottom of my heart, I'm incredibly honored to be able to bake the potatoes this year with the rest of the AMPC. I really hope you like them.

Hooroo,

Jim Pipe,
AMPC Chair, 2012 Melbourne