

Report on the British Chapter Meeting of ISMRM, Sheffield 2002

The British Chapter of ISMRM annual scientific meeting was held at Halifax Hall, Sheffield from September 2nd-3rd this year and attracted a record number of papers and delegates showing the increasing strength of the UK community in MR research. Although a national meeting, invited speakers from Switzerland, Canada, Ireland and Germany gave the meeting an international flavour and provided some high quality lectures. It was particularly pleasing that many of the presentations were given by PhD students and a record number of student stipends were provided this year.

The Bill Moore memorial lecture was given in outstanding fashion by Professor Graeme Bydder on the topic of Magic Angle and Ultra Short TE Imaging. This proved to be an absolute *tour de force* and Professor Bydder stunned the audience with his work on imaging structures which have always been thought to be invisible on conventional MR such as the Achilles tendon.

The Scientific Programme was structured around six major themes. The first session was on imaging flow in its various guises and Prof David Firmin provided a masterly overview of the current strengths and weaknesses of MR for quantitative flow measurement. Dr Jim Meaney, after a difficult early morning start from Dublin including a taxi ride from Birmingham airport (not Sheffield as booked ...), managed to rise to the occasion and demonstrate how useful and important MR angiography has now become in the radiologists armoury.

Following an excellent lunch, functional MR of the body and brain were superbly summarised by Dr Hans Ulrich-Kauczor from the University of Mainz and Professor Bob Turner from the University of London respectively, showing just how far MR has come in measuring physiology within the last 5-10 years. Novel MR technological developments and sequences were discussed in the final session including a fascinating pictorial magnet engineering tutorial from Nik Kerley and a magnificent overview of parallel imaging by one of the pioneers of the SENSE method, Professor Peter Boesiger from Zurich.

At the end of the session, there was a lively reprise of Sounds and Visions of MR by UK participants just back from their Hawaii tour including a gutsy live performance by Dr Donald McRobbie, complete with his Fender Telecaster, a surfing safari video by James Wilson from Oxford and a wacky k-space tutorial including real and imaginary anthropomorphic Nyquist ghosts by Martin Bencsik from Nottingham. Fortunately his encore, which featured a video nasty of him performing a full Monty in Hawaii, was narrowly averted by the recalcitrance of the performing laptop PC (video available to interested parties on special request and a small fee (rated 18)) !

M(or)RI(s) Dancing

Monday night featured the conference dinner which consisted of some basic Yorkshire fare (including Yorkshire puddings for starters), followed by entertainment in the bar from an Irish music inspired band - 'Rumours of Whisky' and a local dance group 'Gift Rappers' who risked life and limb with an exquisite display of sword dancing. The group eventually encouraged the delegates up to dance and many an MR scientist was seen heaving and groaning near the bar after completing one reel too many. Short term memory loss was much in evidence in the delegates dancing displays – hopefully not MR related.

Tuesday morning kicked off with a (much needed) laid-back 'How I Do It' session, which contained very useful talks describing more practical issues associated with quantitative spectroscopy (Dr Ian Marshall), image registration (Dr Derek Hill) and fMRI (Dr Peter Jezzard).

A fascinating scientific session on MR of human development was followed by excellent plenary talks from Dr Elspeth Whitby (having apparently fully recovered from starring with the Gift Rapping sword dancers and with all limbs intact !) and Dr Mary Rutherford from the Hammersmith who spoke on perfusion measurements in neonates.

Following lunch we were entertained by two MR 'veterans' - Professor Peter Allen from Edmonton, Canada who elegantly showed the derivation of spectroscopic spin editing from quantum mechanics and Professor Laurie Hall from Cambridge who illustrated the challenges involved in monitoring drug therapy trials with MR. The final session started with plenaries from Dr Nandita de Souza from the Hammersmith showing the rapid progress made in using MR for monitoring thermal ablation of tumours and Dr Lee Walton from Sheffield who reviewed the long-term use and quality assurance of MR for use with Stereotactic Radiosurgery here in Sheffield. The final scientific session was unfortunately rather rushed and the usual lively questioning following talks had to be curtailed in the interests of delegates catching trains back to London – but the speakers admirably rose to the timing challenge and finished the conference bang on time.

A prize was awarded for the best talk or poster presentation given by a student during the conference in remembrance of the late Professor E Raymond Andrew who died last year. After hot competition, the prize eventually went to Mr James Wilson from Oxford who has devised a new way of improving shimming within the brain for fMRI using a diamagnetic mouth insert.

The Local Organising Committee would like to thank everybody who contributed to the organising and efficient running of the conference, which on all counts ran very smoothly and easily achieved financial balance. We are already looking forward to the event at ICH, London in September next year.

Prof. Martyn Paley
Chair, Sheffield Local Organising Committee