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Editorial

Report on the LXVIII meeting of the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons (BAPS) (July 2022)

Prof Mark Davenport

Dept. Paediatric Surgery, Kings College Hospital, London SE5 9RS, United Kingdom



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The British Association of Paediatric Surgeon's summer (BAPS) conference in Birmingham (Fig. 1) was its first post-COVID conference held where mask-less delegates could meet, hug, exchange stories without the need of a passenger locator form or a negative rapid antigen test. We greeted international delegates from the USA, Norway, Finland, Brazil, Malaysia, Thailand, New Zealand and Australia like long-lost relatives released from sudden captivity. Reminders did exist of course – air travel is still not 100% infallible as the Greek delegate found out when his suitcase and formalwear turned up in Burundi rather than Birmingham!

The conference, as is now common was hybrid and a multi-format platform was provided once again by MedAll (<https://medall.org/>) led by Phil McElroy. The principal organizer, as with most BAPS congresses was the Honorary Secretary of the organisation – Mr Ashish Desai; with Kate Meadon and Shan Teo flittering around the conference reception. All told, there were 380 registered delegates (about 1/3 on-line).

A full programme of lectures were presented in person, but there was a cumbersome web-based question format read out by the session's Chair to engage the on-line community – who of course remained stubbornly silent throughout. Still, it was good to see some of the usual suspects in the hall, who usually instantly stand up to queue at the microphones and hear the sound of their own voices, have to resort to vigorously stabbing the keys of their smart phones to make their points.

The Peter Paul Rickham and Presidents' Prize session was a high calibre event demonstrating that COVID didn't seem to retard major conventional surgical research. The former was won by Laura Priviteva from University College London and Great Ormond Street for "Near-infrared Anti-GD2 targeted probes for fluorescence guided surgery in neuroblastoma" and the latter the redoubtable Naomi Wright from Kings College, London for "Reducing Mortality from Gastroschisis in Sub-Saharan Africa etc."

There were also a whole host of prize awards for poster presentations courtesy of the various ex-Presidents: Grace Poole (Kings College Hospital/ St Georges Hospital / Royal Cornwall Hospital) for "Adherence to ATLS secondary and tertiary survey completion for paediatric trauma in a major trauma centre" (Richard Stewart Prize); Clara Chong (Southampton) for "Neonatal Outcomes of intestinal atresia – impact of prenatal diagnosis" and Sara Faily (Manchester) for "Ultrasound-Guided Dynamic needle tip positioning produces high levels of safety and efficiency in paediatric vascular access" (Mark Davenport Prizes); Soham Bandyopadhyay (Global Health Research Group, Oxford) for "A 12 month international survey; childhood cancer patients in low, middle and high income countries during COVID 19 pandemic" (Munther Haddad Prize) and Godfrey Sama Philipo (Tanzania) for "Effectiveness of preoperative bathing practice using soap: a RCT" (David Lloyd Prize).

This year's Denis Browne Gold Medal was once again introduced by his son, Desmond Browne CBE QC, and awarded to Dakshesh Parikh from Birmingham in recognition for his central role in driving paediatric thoracic surgery, both open and thoracoscopic, in the West Midlands.

We had an eclectic crowd of invited lecturers from the four corners of the world where post-COVID travel had opened up. So, Marc Levitt, was this year's Journal of Pediatric Surgery Lecturer, one of the most prominent of paediatric colo-rectal surgeons from Children's Nationwide Washington DC. He talked on history of anorectal malformation and the challenge of setting up a major multi-disciplinary clinic for such children. Dariusz Patkowski from Wroclaw, Poland was the Karl Storz Lecturer detailing his huge and very successful experience in minimally-invasive surgery for oesophageal atresia. What is he doing right that most surgeons at least in the UK seem to be doing wrong [1]. Both these lectures are published in the current Congress issue [2,3].

The Hugh Greenwood Lecturer was the first to have been invited from South America, Simone Abib (Sao Paulo), who talked about the mammoth effort behind reducing the mortality and mor-

E-mail address: markdav2@ntworld.com



Fig. 1. Birmingham – widely accepted as a cradle of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th Century and driven by men such as (left to right) Mathew Boulton (1728 - 1809), James Watt (1736 - 1819), and William Murdoch (1754 - 1839) who invented, manufactured, and exported steam engines to the world.

bidity from accidents and trauma in Brazilian children [4]. This story is also detailed in the current issue.

The Karl Storz (Urology) was Rowan Parks from Belfast and the Mason Browne Lecture given by David Nott from St Mary's Hospital, London.

The publications committee was restored once more to meeting at first light, in the Hyatt Regency Hotel this year, and included insights and erudition from Kokila Lakhoo (Oxford), Simon Eaton (London), Peng Ong (Birmingham) and Paul Johnson (actually in Oxford as a Covid casualty). Altogether there were a record 44 manuscripts submitted out of which some 21 papers were chosen of original work, and my thanks goes out to each and every one of them for their willing donation of time and talent.

The core of this Congress issue ranged, as always across the entire spectrum that we call paediatric surgery. From a randomised controlled trial on the use of simple soap in reducing surgical site infection from Tanzania to truly 21st medicine involving the experimental intervention of stem cells to reduce growth retardation from Boston, MA. Although the BAPS has always attracted overseas delegates and hence submissions, it is notable this year that there was a high success rate from some rather unlikely places. There were four from sub-Saharan African centres and two from Malaysia for example.

Another feature that distinguished this year from last was a real live social programme and in this respect Birmingham did not dis-

appoint. There was of course the Annual Dinner in The Exchange, a converted bank, with the highlight being a sensationally funny after-dinner speech from local surgeon, Mr Tony Lander. Less formal venues frequented by hordes of the younger generation delegates looking for after-hours action were centred on Broad Street just behind the conference venue and one called PopWorld in particular.

Next year, we return to Europe with a short hop across the Channel to the UNESCO-accredited mediaeval city of Bruges in Belgium. This really is an authentic Northern European jewel full of historical ambience and should be sensational. Indeed, this was to be the location of the COVID aborted 2020 conference, and they still hold our deposit on the conference centre!

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