Symington Bequest Award Meeting Report

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**The International Federation of Associations of Anatomists (IFAA) Meeting, 8th to 10th August 2014, Beijing, China**

First of all I would like to express my gratitude to the Anatomical Society for the financial support which allowed me to participate in the meeting of the International Federation of Associations of Anatomists (IFAA) held in Beijing, China.

The main title of the IFAA Congress for this year was ‘*Anatomy, from gross to molecular and digital’* and the broad spectrum of topics was discussed during parallel symposia. Because of my personal and professional interests I chose a panel titled ‘Medical Education’ aiming to address the problems of the medical education in various countries on different continents. Presentations widely ranged from conceptual topics such as position of anatomy in medical curriculum, best practices of anatomy teaching, and secrets of anatomy pedagogy to the detailed description of teaching methods and facilities in different medical schools, e.g. in Germany, Australia and Africa. One of the asked questions ‘Is anatomy still important in modern medical education?’ was positively answered and supported by a wide range of international educational research. It was proven that not only anatomists’ but also students’ and general public’s expectation is to have a high quality anatomical education. This led to another question: ‘What does modern anatomical education mean?’ Attempts to answer this question were also made during this congress. One suggestion was that student-centred and active learning is the best practice and future of anatomical education, another suggestion was that clinically oriented teaching (with modern visualisation techniques such as laparoscopy and 3D CT) is the best way of teaching. During the discussion it became clear that a lot of inequalities in the access to modern teaching tools still exist. One initiative presented during the congress was a worldwide network for sharing anatomical teaching materials and tools on the internet platform initiated by the Australian universities. It strongly resonated that even with great digital resources (we had seen an impressive presentation of a Chinese Virtual Man), dissection is still considered the best anatomical teaching tool. Another topic raised in Beijing were issues associated with body donation programs around the world. No doubt, using donated bodies open doors not only to the knowledge of the anatomical structures and range of anatomical variations but also influence attitudes of the students. The great impact of the body donation programs on student’s behaviour and importance to moral integrity of the future doctors was mentioned in presentations from Brazil and Germany.

My poster entitled *‘Transforming Anatomy Educational Landscapes’* was presented on the poster session on Friday, 8th August. It focused on recent research made by Claire Smith, Scott Border and I on the blended learning and usage of different teaching/learning methods, both digital and physical to support students learning. We found that improving physical environment with current digital achievements has a strong impact on students’ results and perception of anatomy. Different micro-teaching activities such as electronic, interactive version of students handbook with immediate feedback, podcasts and pre-recorded video presentations, free access to the narrated PowerPoint lectures and electronic anatomy atlas in conjunction with hands-on activities on prosections, plastinated specimens and pathology pots or living anatomy session and integration of knowledge from different disciplines (gross anatomy, histology, pathology, embryology) lead to deeper understanding of anatomical concepts. Most of our students agreed that multidisciplinary and student oriented approach help them improving anatomy learning. This poster was met with a great interest from the public and allowed both the exchange of ideas and to gain valuable contacts from delegates from different countries such as: Australia, Nigeria, China, Germany, Turkey, Brazil and United States. Critical analysis and vivid discussion revealed some of the areas needed to be revised in our work and created some inspirations for the future. Discussions were carried out not only during the poster presentation time but also at other days.

Meetings like this congress are usually a great opportunity to meet people, make new acquaintances and refresh old ones. This event was also an opportunity to take a closer look at the culture of China and taste lovely (but sometimes original) Chinese food. I think attendance of meetings like this it is important, especially in times of globalisation and internalisation of contemporary higher education. It was my first worldwide conference and I am really grateful that you enabled me participation in this event.

*See also the link url:* [*www.best.edu.au*](http://www.best.edu.au)

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