

Welcome to HAI Armagh 2008

As our annual meeting draws near, I look forward to a satisfying scientific and social experience in HAI in Armagh. Once again we have speakers drawn from three continents with diverse medical and scientific backgrounds.

We are honoured to welcome the president of the Royal College of Pathologists and past president of the British Society for Haematology, Prof Adrian Newland, as our distinguished Liam O'Connell memorial lecturer for 2008.

The growing membership of our society reflects the increasing focus on blood and haematology in Ireland. As concerns about patient safety receive increasing attention in our European community and elsewhere, the island of Ireland grapples with the challenges of stringent blood and tissue legislation. Policy makers and governments are spending more time thinking about haematology than heretofore. Against this background, Joan O'Riordan from the IBTS will update us on prion disease.

Ireland has seen many developments and quality improvements in the area of coagulation over the last decade. In haemophilia and at the interface of coagulation and inflammation, Irish haematologists have made positive contributions. We are privileged to anticipate lectures by world leaders Victor Blanchette and Charles Esmon in these areas, preceded by relevant "home grown" research from James O'Donnell and his colleagues.

As advances in cancer treatments for haematological malignancies are recognised to outstrip advances in solid tumours, haematology's doctors, nurses and scientists are moving centre stage in oncology. In our programme, this year in Armagh, we are delighted to welcome world leaders Paul Richardson (myeloma), David Linch (lymphoma) and Bridgit Wilkins (myeloproliferative disorders), to update us on aspects of these conditions. Research in the laboratory often underpins advances at the bedside. This is very evident in the field of cytogenetics. We will hear from international authority, Andrew Moorman of the advances in cytogenetics in ALL. I hope that, as an association, all our members join with me in encouraging increased participation by scientists interested in haematology from service laboratories as well as research institutes. Today's research is the foundation of tomorrow's treatment advances and improvements in patient outcome.

The nurses group have had a large number of abstracts this year, a trend we expect to continue. In haematology nursing, as elsewhere, well-conducted research in nursing will ultimately enhance the quality of life for haematology patients. Mary Kelly, chair of the nurses group, will address the association on some thought provoking patient issues. At this point, I would also like to acknowledge the enormous (and sometimes unsung) contribution of clinical haematology nurses and haematology clinical trials nurses to the recruitment and care of patients in clinical haematology studies, some of which will be presented at HAI.

At HAI, we hope to encourage and attract Irish research and look forward to the high quality free communications and talks from local experts. Our free communication slots were very competitive this year and many high scoring abstracts have been

allocated a poster presentation. We anticipate keenly judged poster prizes from among the excellent material presented in the scientific and nursing categories.

On Sunday morning, trainees north and south will be treated to a programme of teaching compiled by Gary Benson and Christine Macartney, and embellished by our antipodean colleague, haematopathologist Wendy Erber. In addition to running the HAI morphology quiz, Dr Erber has also agreed to teach our trainees. The association is most appreciative of her contribution.

Finally, I am delighted to announce that HAI are strengthening our links with EHA (European Haematology Association) every year. This year for the first time the meeting is accredited by EHA and members can register for CME points online under the EHA scheme.

It remains for me to wish all of you safe travelling to and from Armagh and an enjoyable and intellectually satisfying meeting.

Mary Cahill
President HAI