



***Australian Society for Reproductive Biology.  
Newsletter No 43 November 1998***

**From the Communications Officer – Jim Cummins.**

I've now taken over as Communications officer for ASRB. Please check our WWW page on <http://numbat.murdoch.edu.au/spermatology/asrbhome.html>. If you need to contact me see the list of officers at the end of this newsletter.

From: A/Prof. AM Dharmarajan [dharmad@anhb.uwa.edu.au](mailto:dharmad@anhb.uwa.edu.au) Anatomy & Human Biology  
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“After 2 years and 4 Newsletters, I have decided to step down as editor of the Newsletter. It has been a great pleasure to have had the opportunity to interact with members of the committee and members of ASRB. With the advent of our Homepage (thanks to Jim) I trust that the Newsletter will truly become the interactive forum. With best wishes!”

Dharma mentions that he has been nominated to the editorial board of Endocrinology to serve from January 1, 1999 to December 31, 2002. He is already on the Editorial Boards of Biology of Reproduction and Reproductive Toxicology.

**Publications on the WWW**

As members probably know, I run a number of WWW pages including that for the Society and one for key journals

(<http://numbat.murdoch.edu.au/spermatology/journals.html>)

One interesting development is the arrival of WWW-based journals offering full text and graphics as PDF files (these are files that can be read by Adobe Acrobat, a cross-platform, freely downloadable reading software package). *Biology of Reproduction*, for example, now offers full text downloads on <http://intl.bioreprod.org/> with the assistance of Stanford University's HighWire Press.

*Frontiers in Bioscience* is publishing a series of reviews on gametes and fertilization with Elisabetta Baldi as Invited Editor. So far, the following have been published and it is anticipated that more will come out soon (thanks to Ed Roldan for drawing my attention to this)

:

Roldan ERS. Role of phospholipases during sperm acrosomal exocytosis. *Front Biosci* 1998 Nov 1; 3:D1109-19

Berruti G. Signaling events during male germ cell differentiation: bases and perspectives. *Front Biosci* 1998 Nov 1; 3:D1097-108

Baldi E, Luconi M, Bonaccorsi L, Forti G. Nongenomic effects of progesterone on spermatozoa: mechanisms of signal transduction and clinical implications. *Front Biosci* 1998 Nov 1; 3:D1051-9

Zara J, Naz RK. The role of carbohydrates in mammalian sperm-egg interactions: how important are carbohydrate epitopes? *Front Biosci* 1998 Oct 15; 3:D1028-38

The abstract of each review can be accessed via Medline on PubMed (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/>). Search using the name of the first author. Once in the abstract, the full review can be accessed and then downloaded in PDF format.

As I'm rapidly running out of space for journals in the cubicle allotted me by Murdoch University, I welcome this move away from printed journals. Of course, it's always nice to browse through the latest edition and have your eye caught by striking micrographs, however I suspect this is a luxury that will soon be a memory. How many times do you actually open that 1970 JRF? As retired members know only too well, libraries are not particularly keen to acquire journal stock when they have a hard time keeping existing print material in good order!

### **Secretary's Report**

From Jeremy Thompson.

Enclosed with this newsletter are the Minutes (and various reports) of the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Society, Perth, August 1998. We are distributing them to provide members with the "latest" concerning the Society, especially in lieu of the efforts to bring the Fertility Society of Australia and ASRB closer together. Please provide me with comments or any queries arising from the Minutes. This year we have introduced a new type of membership, the Overseas (excl. NZ) member. This is available to any

member not resident in Australia and New Zealand and has been set at the rate of the Full membership rate (ie. \$35.00 AUD). Please advise ACTS if you think you are eligible, but have been asked to pay the full rate of \$70.00.

Mark Bradley has resigned from the Executive Committee. On behalf of the ASRB, I'd like to thank Mark for his contribution. The Executive is considering co-opting a further Committee member. Thanks also to Jim Cummins for taking on the role of Communications Officer from Dharma who resigned due to absence while on a sabbatical. Again, the Society is indebted to Dharma for producing the newsletter and developing up the Communications Officer role with Jim.

## **Chairman's report**

Chairman's report (by Marilyn Renfree - from the Minutes)

### **4.1 Discussion Document**

The members of the Executive have had several meetings to discuss key issues concerning the future of the Society as well as to deal with the day-to-day business of the Society. The major issue is with whom we should meet on an annual basis, as well as where and when. I ask that all members read and attend the AGM to provide feedback and vote on this very important issue.

### **4.2 Membership.**

At last year's meeting, new Overseas Membership and subscription charges were proposed. These have not yet been approved, so will be moved at the AGM. The Executive have also been considering ways to increase membership.

### **4.3 Guidelines.**

The Executive is concerned that many of the guidelines for JSA-awardees, Founders Lecturer entitlements, etc. are not clear. The Executive will tighten such regulations and make them accessible to members, perhaps using the web-site (*see the report by Graeme Martin below – Ed.*).

### **4.4 RFD support.**

The Society is immensely fortunate to have RFD as its official journal and the Executive encourages members to support it. The publication of The Founder's Lecture and other Special Interest Lectures within RFD will continue but as yet we have not succeeded in persuading the journal to publish our abstracts. We will approach the journal again (*Note the change of editor in the address list at the end of this newsletter – Ed.*).

### **4.5 Executive and AGM meetings.**

Much of the time during our business meetings is spent in verbalising reports which could be disseminated prior to these meetings. The Executive are currently experimenting with this system to see if we can increase the efficiency of such meetings. We ask that you read the reports before the AGM so that the time can be spent addressing any queries you have.

#### **4.6 AVCC Common Week.**

The Executive is very aware that due to the academic nature of the majority of our membership, holding meetings outside the AVCC is highly undesirable. The Executive will continue to strongly recommend to the Joint Executives that Annual General Meetings should be held within the AVCC Common Week. (*See the item below on future relationships with the FSA – Ed.*)

#### **Report on the Perth Conference**

by Graeme Martin

The conference appeared to go smoothly, apart from one or two hiccups with the audiovisual equipment due to faulty power lines. The venue, Burswood Convention Centre, seemed to work out quite well, and the people who ran the building looked after our interests (at least, those of the Organising Committee!) with efficiency. In my experience, these professional convention centres have been getting better over the years and it is now not at all worthwhile going back to a University setting (especially considering the prices that our Universities want to charge). Convention Centres are also more pleasing to the sponsors.

The total number of delegates was 346, a number with which the LOC is quite happy. We had expected less delegates than normal due to the timing of the event (in a teaching week) and the distance involved (though we Perth people happily travel it every year!), so we had budgeted on 200 for break-even. Sponsorship was also very successful and well ahead of budget. The finances have not yet been settled, but it seems likely that the Conference will make a profit of around \$10000. I do not know the breakdown of delegates between the two Societies, but I imagine that ASRB will take home about \$3000.

The Perth LOC was chaired by Tom Ratajczak on behalf of ESA. ASRB was represented by Dominique Blache (secretary), Brendan Waddell, Jim Cummins, Anne Jequier, Bronwyn Stuckey and yours truly (we are all members of ESA too!). Brendan was also chairing the ASRB POC, so was coordinating activities with the LOC and with the ESA's POC, chaired by Peter Leedman, who was also on the LOC, and I was looking after JSA for ASRB. If you have been able to fight your way through that previous sentence, you will have realised that all the major players were sitting around the same table ...importantly, in great harmony. Despite doing everything we could to ensure perfect coordination of programs and venues, there are clashes. These are simply inevitable when you have to cram so many meetings (ASRB, ESA, diabetes and mineral people) and so many papers into so few days. I challenge anyone to disagree ... especially previous POC's!

The organisation has also progressed very smoothly because of the efforts of Pat Tart and her crew at ACTS. I do not understand how she can remain so polite when so many people mess up her plans for the perfect conference. The problems that we have had, due to the timing of the meeting and the venue, were not due in any way to the ASRB or the ESA or their respective organisers. These things were dictated to us three years

ago. If for no other reason than our need for a fully attended, smoothly-run, uninhibited annual meeting (arguably one of the main functions of the Society), we must change the current arrangements. This can be either through merger with FSA or by 3-way ESA-FSA-ASRB meetings. This will allow us to divorce ourselves from the constraints of meetings with a diabetes focus.

The Sunday Session, our new concept for 1998, focussed on reproductive technology, and was well attended. It had a fairly strong research focus, but it could easily have been aimed squarely at practitioners and even include a workshop and demonstrations of equipment. For commercial practitioners who have no interest in the more fundamental aspects of the discipline, Sunday is a good day since it only costs a day registration, they don't have to worry about accommodation for a week, and the working week is not disrupted. I'm sure that this would appeal to those involved in the practice of reproductive technology (animal and human) as well as the companies that support this industry. This would be an attraction to this sector or our membership or potential membership (there is about 100 of these people). We need to remember that these are the people who translate much of our science into technology and commerce, an essential component of the modern world of science funding. For the same reasons, it would also be an attraction to FSA. At the time of writing, we are toying with the idea of meeting up with FSA in 2000 (*see item below – Ed*). Apart from the above arguments, one of the best meetings in my recent memory was the one in Newcastle (1989?) where we were joined by the FSA (*An acrimonious argument about funding arrangements for that meeting were also one of the triggers for the schism – Ed*).

The conference may have run without major hiccups, but it will probably not be remembered for that so much as the Conference Dinner. Sure, we had a delightful (if cramped) venue with excellent views, good food and wine, but the highlight that will always remain with us will undoubtedly be the songs of Bernard Carney! (*available from our WWW page – Ed*)

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the hard work put in by Tom Ratajczak, Dominique Blache, Brendan Waddell, Jim Cummins, Scott Wilson, Peter Mark, Peter Leedman and Bronwyn Stuckey, plus the 20-odd postgraduate students who bravely supervised the projectors.

### **Programme Organizing Committee Report**

From Brendan Waddell

The Annual Scientific Meeting held at the Burswood Convention Centre in August began with the Sunday Symposium on Reproductive Technology and finished with a joint ASRB/ESA Apoptosis Symposium on the Wednesday morning. The intervening two days were filled with a diverse programme comprising two plenary lectures, nine oral/miniposter sessions and a special ANZCCART Presentation. A total of 80 presentations were made during the meeting, the main features of which were the 1998 Founders Lecture presented by Professor David de Kretser, the Special Industry Lecture presented by Professor Donald Evenson, the Junior Scientist Award Final, and the Sunday Symposium.

An important and popular change introduced in 1998 was the opportunity for members to submit their miniposters via e-mail, and more than half were received in this way. While some minor formatting problems were encountered at the POC end, overall this approach was very successful, facilitating the submission procedure for members and ensuring greatly improved editorial efficiency for the POC. Common membership of the ASRB and ESA POCs in 1998 was particularly useful for coordination of the two Programs, and special thanks are extended to Peter Leedman, Chair of the ESA POC, for his cooperation. I would also like to thank the other members of the ASRB POC, Mark Bradley, Jim Cummins, Dharma and Graeme Martin, for their efforts in putting together a diverse and stimulating program, and Tom Rataczak and the LOC and Pat Tart and her ACTS team for their work in coordinating the joint Meetings. Finally, we are indebted to Jim Cummins for his maintenance of the ASRB Website, and in particular his posting of the ASRB Program on the site well before the meeting.

### **Report from the LOC 1999**

From Mark Hedger Chair

Organisation of the 1999 ASRB/ESA Annual Conferences is well under way. The Conjoint Meeting will be held at the Hilton on the Park in East Melbourne, from Sunday 26 September to Wednesday 29 September. The venue is close to Melbourne's famous city-parks, old public buildings and sporting venues, including the venerable MCG. The Conferences will be somewhat smaller this year compared with previous years in Melbourne, since the ADS will be meeting elsewhere and at a different time in 1999. This has allowed us to convene at a more intimate (and less expensive!) venue. The Hilton certainly will provide a very different atmosphere from the cavernous halls of the Convention Centre!

A joint ASRB/ESA Local Organising Committee has been established and has met several times already to deal with sponsorship, venue and social program issues. I am pleased that Pat Tart and ACTS are our official Conference Organisers for the Meeting, having worked with ACTS on the last two Melbourne LOCs. In line with the recommendation of the Society that the LOC and Program Organising Committee Chairs be located in the same city, the ASRB POC in 1999 will be headed up by David Phillips.

An exciting and innovative program is under development. Finally, the Annual Conference begins on the AFL Grand Final weekend, as usual. This juxtaposition will have a much larger impact on the meeting in 1999, since the meeting venue is literally next door to the MCG. While the Grand Final will no doubt add to the atmosphere, it also presents some interesting challenges, but rest assured that your Committee will be doing everything to ensure a stimulating and enjoyable Annual Conference. See you in Melbourne!,

## **Junior Scientist Award, Perth 1998**

From Graeme Martin

There was a very strong field of 18 in the competition this year, giving the judging panel a few extra headaches as they struggled to reduce the list to 6 for the oral session. As usual, the orals were very well presented, although there were clear signs of nervousness in one or two of the candidates. All to be expected. As the cliché goes, all of the contestants were winners but, alas, there is only one prize and, on behalf of the JSA Committee, I congratulate Marie Pantaleon for her excellent work. For those of you who missed out, please try again next year.

Message to JSA winners: it is imperative that we place some sort of time limit on spending the money associated with Award so that we do not make life difficult for the sponsors (or rather, their accountants). Serono have suggested a limit of 2 years, which seems very reasonable. This is surely plenty of time for you to plan the travel and make the submission to the ASRB Committee (a prerequisite for claiming the prize). So, if you win, don't look on the prize as superannuation!

Message to supervisors: I would like to raise one or two issues about the JSA, to make the lives of the judges a bit easier and also to prevent disillusionment with your students, particularly the younger ones. The committees from 1997 and 1998 both discussed the issue of eligibility of honours students and the overwhelming feeling is that they should NOT be encouraged to enter. This is because one of our key assessment criteria is that the work should, as far as possible, reflect the intellectual input and output of the candidate. It is very rare indeed that an honours student independently conceives of a project, develops the hypothesis, carries out the work, analyses the data and interprets the results. A pedant might argue that none of us do this, and it is true that this cannot be an absolute criterion. However, we all expect an increasing degree of independence in the postgraduate student as they develop. Ultimately, of course, they are expected to become a "self-starter" in research and this ability is one of the main focuses of the JSA award. Consequently, the best candidates and most likely winners will come from the pool containing students who are nearing the end of their doctoral studies, or who have completed their studies and graduated (but are still less than 3 years postdoctoral). The JSA has this focus because we want to reward a junior "scientist", rather than a "student", and we want the candidates, especially in their oral presentation, to be able to demonstrate a more rounded view of their field of study than is usually possible in an abstract. Thus, one of the criteria that the judges use to assess the JSA is evidence of development in the project, that is development from previous studies and thus previous years. Our aim is to maintain the prestige that is currently attached to the JSA. Having said this, the rules are not hard and fast. We encourage all students (except honours) to enter because the experience and discipline of preparing for the contest can only be valuable. The JSA Committee welcomes all comments and suggestions. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have a point to make.

## Relationship with the Fertility Society of Australia

The AGM of the society in Perth moved a motion to develop closer relationships with the FSA. A subcommittee comprising Marilyn Renfree, Jeremy Thompson, Mark Hedger, Jill Shaw and Alan Trounson was formed. At the recent AGM of the FSA in Hobart there was strong support expressed for closer ties between the two societies, and a subcommittee was established to explore the options. This comprises Rob McLachlan, Gayle Jones, Karin Hammarberg, Roger Cook and Kim Mathews. This committee plans to report to the next Council meeting of the FSA March 1999. Because of this, a motion to change the name of the society was set aside until the future of ASRB and FSA can be resolved. The possibility of a merger was not ruled out.

FSA and ASRB will meet together in Canberra in 2000 – tentatively April 27-30 – the week after Easter. Contact Dr Martyn Stafford-Bell for further information Phone 02 6285 2823 or fax 02 6285 2746.

## Forthcoming meetings

**Andrology in the Nineties. 5<sup>th</sup> Symposium.** Cape Town, South Africa March 25-27 1999. The Genk Institute for Fertility Treatment (Belgium) and the South African Society for Reproductive Medicine and Surgery. Further information Professor D.R. Franken, Reproductive Biology Unit, PO Box 19063, Tygerberg Hospital, Tygerberg 7505 South Africa. Tel./Fax +27-21-933 3270 E mail [drf@maties.sun.ac.za](mailto:drf@maties.sun.ac.za)

**Eleventh World Congress on In vitro Fertilization and Human Reproductive Genetics.** Sydney. 9-14 May, 1999 Secretariat: Conference Action Pty Ltd, PO Box 1231 North Sydney NSW 2059 Tel 02 9956 8333 Fax 02 9956 5154 E mail [confact@conferenceaction.com.au](mailto:confact@conferenceaction.com.au) Register on line on <http://www.worldivf.com.au> There will be a pre-conference **Ares-Serono International Workshop** at the University of Sydney May 7-8 1999. "The Bottleneck: Gamete and Embryo Mitochondria in Humans". Contact Professor Robert Jansen, 4 O'Connell Street, Sydney NSW 2000 or through the Secretariat above.

David Handelsman writes:

"The **International Congress of Endocrinology** will be held in Sydney 2000 in Oct-Nov (Olympics second half September) and members are advised to mark it in their calendars. Some satellites with reproductive endocrinology focus are already in development. Contact me via e-mail on [djh@med.usyd.edu.au](mailto:djh@med.usyd.edu.au) for further details."

"Gail Risbridger and I have been successful in getting the AAS to support an ESA-sponsored **Boden Conference on "Estrogens and Men's Health"** for ~February 2000. Details in development but mark in calendars too."

**Tenth Reinier de Graaf Symposium**, on Female and Male Reproductive Ageing. September 9-11, Utrecht, The Netherlands. Contact Dr Egbert te Velde, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University Hospital Utrecht. Heidelberglaan 100, De Uithof, The Netherlands. Phone +31-30 250 9111 Fax +31q-30 250 5433

**Society for the Study of Fertility (UK)** <http://www.ssf.org.uk/> Summer meeting 1999 - Aberystwyth, 4-8th July. Winter meeting 1999 - Warwick, 16-17th December. Summer meeting 2000 – Edinburgh. Winter meeting 2000 - Utrecht, Netherlands. Summer meeting 2001 – Cambridge. Winter meeting 2001 – London. Summer meeting 2002 – Leeds. Winter meeting 2002 - Tours, France. Summer Meeting 2003 - Aberdeen

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