

Cardiff meeting sparks debate

On Friday 1 February 2013, the Hilton Hotel in Cardiff greeted delegates for the conference *Achieving Improved Outcomes in Neonatology – A Practical Approach*

Now in its third year, meticulously planned to cover current 'hot topics' by its founder, Dr Cora Doherty, the conference was attended by a record number of delegates. Nurses, doctors and allied health professionals involved in neonatal care, enjoyed a packed programme of high quality presentations which systematically addressed the theme of the conference.

The appetites of some had been whetted by the associated conference, *Achieving Improved Outcomes in Neonatology – the Research Perspective*, which had been held the previous afternoon. There the latest developments in several neonatal research areas had been presented together with direction on running multicentre studies and instituting research projects.

The main conference focused on key topics in neonatology which were addressed by an international consortium of experts. Not all shared the same opinion on certain topics, which made for lively debates in the post presentation 'Q&A' sessions. Should CPAP or high flow oxygen therapy be used from birth in premature infants, in the move away from invasive interventions? Will we see the universal use of high flow therapy on infant resuscitation equipment in the near future? Such topics

received much interest from the audience and precipitated considerable discussion of current evidence and practice in this area.

Further debate and contemplation arose regarding the management of patent ductus arteriosus (PDA), with evidence-based medicine supporting conservative, rather than medical or surgical management. Methods of reducing infection and identifying sepsis were compared between units during the discussions. It was evident that the application of best practice in the prevention of infection remains a major goal in neonatology units worldwide. The dependence upon optimal nutrition to augment the long-term outcome of preterm infants is a key factor in the management of neonates. Success in this area was demonstrated by the implementation of a network feeding guideline.

The collation of presentations highlighted advances in neonatology in recent times and demonstrated how such advancements have had a profound influence on preterm survival and outcome. However, the overriding message of the conference was that, while our knowledge has improved in many areas of neonatology, despite this progress there are still several areas that are yet to be fully understood and their definitive management agreed. Ongoing advances in these areas and new topics will, no doubt, be the hotly debated subject matter of next year's meeting in Dublin.



Delegates enjoying the post-conference reception.

The conference ended with a drinks reception in the atrium of the Hilton Hotel and a first class performance by the girl choristers of the Cathedral School under the expert direction of conductor Simon Lovell Jones.

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