

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THE 1997 ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING IN WAITANGI, NEW ZEALAND

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Dear Editor

Now that all the 1997 SPUMS ASM papers have seen the light of day, thanks to the Editor's patient cajoling of the authors (including this writer!), I wish to make a few comments as Scientific Convenor.

I had three goals as Convenor. First, to make this one of the very best scientific meetings that SPUMS has had. That this was achieved is clearly seen from the large diverse and high quality set of publications that have appeared in the Journal over the past year or so. What this does not tell non-attendees, though, is the high standards of the actual presentations by almost all the speakers (even those who left their slides behind).

Our visiting speakers, Richard Moon and James Francis, were outstanding. James' paper on mechanisms of spinal decompression injury<sup>1</sup> will stand as *the* definitive review of this important field of research for the next decade. That such a paper should appear in a non-indexed journal like ours is a considerable mark of respect for SPUMS.

Secondly, we Kiwis were determined to show the doubting Ozzies that northern New Zealand has world class diving rivalling anywhere in the world. In this we were fortunate to have excellent weather. I doubt if anyone will forget the three wonderful days at the Poor Knights. I knew we had succeeded in this goal when Chris Acott graciously admitted he had had a wonderful time!

Finally we wished this meeting to be a financial success for the Society. In this we were disappointed. It was only due to significant sponsorship that the meeting came close to breaking even. Registrations were only about 75% of what we had hoped for, and the support from New Zealand members was particularly disappointing. They missed out on the most outstanding diving medicine meeting there is likely to be on this side of the Tasman in 20 years.

From the comments I have received many have a misconception of the costs involved in running an international meeting with world class speakers. Likewise the Australian response could have been better. For all those who did attend, thank you very much for making this one of the most enjoyable and satisfying experiences (even if it was incredibly busy) of my professional life.

I would like to acknowledge some important contributions. Des Gorman ensured the meeting's success by setting up Richard and James as our visitors and negotiating successfully with the Accident Rehabilitation and Compensation Insurance Corporation (ACC) for major financial support.

Other financial support came from NorthPower and PADI International for the workshop. SPUMS is especially indebted to Paterson Industries for the considerable support with equipment and teaching personnel for the very successful first aid workshops on board "Tiger IV". Nicholas Roberts from Auckland would be the best paramedic instructor I have come across. Dr Rees Jones gave me considerable support and encouragement behind the scenes.

Thank you one and all to all SPUMS speakers. Bill Day's cheerful company throughout the week and his atmospheric after dinner talk on the General Grant expedition are special memories for me.

My last thought has to go to Conference Manager, Tania Townsend (of Fullers and then the Waitangi Resort) who, with her blend of youth, professionalism and sunny personality proved the most unflappable front-of-house person one could wish for.

Times like these are what SPUMS is all about. I can only encourage more members to attend meetings. Attendance by less than 10% of members is a poor showing and unfortunately the rest do not know what they are missing. The Editor is the lucky one, his job demands he go to every meeting!

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#### Reference

- 1 Francis J. Mechanism of spinal cord injury in DCI. *SPUMS J* 1998; 28 (1): 29-41

#### Key Words

General, letter, meeting.