



Editorial

Foundation and early history of the international association for ambulatory surgery 1995–2001

The initiative to establish Ambulatory (Day) Surgery in the International forum can be traced to the First European Congress on Ambulatory Surgery, which was held in Brussels, 8–9 March 1991, and organised by Dr Claude de Lathouwer, President, Belgian Association of Ambulatory Surgery. This was a success with 600 delegates from 25 countries and it was decided to hold another conference in 1993.

The Second European Congress on Ambulatory Surgery was held in Brussels 19–20 March 1993, during which a group of representatives from interested nations held an informal meeting, convened by Claude de Lathouwer, to consider the formation of an international association dedicated to ambulatory surgery. The proposal attracted strong support and it was agreed that more formal meetings of the group of interested representatives should be organised.

A further meeting was held in London (UK) 17–18 September 1993 and the interested group became the Foundation Committee, which unanimously agreed that the International Association for Ambulatory Surgery should be formed. Claude de Lathouwer was elected Convenor. Member nations of the Foundation Committee were as follows: Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

It was also decided that the Association should be registered in Brussels (Belgium) and this would require preparation of a Constitution. Ambulatory Surgery, a journal dedicated to ambulatory (day) surgery practice had been commenced in 1992 with Paul Jarrett (UK) and Bernard Wetchler (USA) as editors—the first issue was launched in March 1993 during the second European Congress. It was agreed that Ambulatory Surgery would become the official journal of the Association.

The next meeting of the Foundation Committee was held in Orlando (USA) 9–10 May 1994 and this was almost entirely dedicated to drawing up the Constitu-

tion. Claude de Lathouwer agreed to prepare a draft Constitution. It was also agreed that the next conference should be held in Brussels, 14–15 March 1995 as the First International (Third European) Congress on Ambulatory Surgery.

The Foundation Committee met again on 14 March 1995 during the First International (Third European) Congress on Ambulatory Surgery and the Constitution was adopted. The following day, 15 March 1995, formation of the International Association for Ambulatory Surgery was announced at the Congress by Claude de Lathouwer, who had been elected Foundation President. A Foundation Dinner was held the same night.

The main objectives of the Association are—to serve as an international multidisciplinary forum for the exchange of information and advancement of ambulatory surgery, to promote education and research, to establish guidelines and to act as an advisory body to all interested parties for the development and maintenance of high standards of patient care in ambulatory surgery facilities.

Claude de Lathouwer offered to locate the Secretariat of the Association at his office in Brussels and this was gratefully accepted by the Executive, which was formed from the Foundation Committee. The efforts of Claude de Lathouwer in organising the Congresses, convening meetings of the Foundation Committee and preparing the Constitution of the Association, were acknowledged by the Executive. He also initiated the important project of collecting international data on ambulatory surgery practice in conjunction with the Organisation for Education and Co-operative Development (OECD). This data has been published and continues to be updated.

The Constitution provides that full membership representatives of affiliated nations form the General Assembly, which elects the Executive, and two meetings are held each year. The President and the Executive are elected for 2 year terms.

The primary challenge for the new Association was to increase membership and to establish Ambulatory Surgery as the pre-eminent International Journal on Ambulatory Surgery practice. Paul Jarrett (UK), Bernard Wetchler (USA) and Tom Ogg (UK) have been tireless in their successful efforts in these projects.

The Second International Congress on Ambulatory Surgery was held in London (UK) 14–15 April 1997. This was a successful Congress with 1100 delegates from 36 countries. The General Assembly/Executive held meetings during the Congress and Paul Jarrett (UK) became President. He initiated the project of preparing international definitions of ambulatory (day) surgery, and co-opted Australia to assist. Membership of the Association steadily increased.

The Third International Congress on Ambulatory Surgery was held in Venice (Italy) 25–28 April 1999 and was a most successful event with 2311 delegates from 41 countries. Tom Ogg (UK) became President. His successful efforts in attracting major sponsorships for the Association significantly contributed to establishing its financial strength. He also prepared the Bid manual for nations to apply to host International Congresses. He identified quality expansion of day surgery as the main objective with increasing effort to expand membership to Asia Pacific, South America and Eastern Bloc nations. The preparation of International Definitions was protracted, however, these were finalised in October 1999 and will be published in Ambulatory Surgery with translations into 11 languages. The important project of developing an education process for ambulatory surgery was established with Italy being delegated the responsibility of preparing a Thematic Network for distant ambulatory surgery education. A Skymed Pilot Utilisation Plan was introduced in September 2000 and preparation of a course of lectures, video tapes and data will then be presented on the internet for world wide retrieval.

Financial management of the Association was delegated to France and the excellent efforts of the Treasurer, Gerard Parmentier, have been recognised by the Executive.

The Association is now well established and continues to expand. The Congresses have been very successful with increasing numbers of delegates. The Third International Congress on Ambulatory Surgery was to be held in Geneva, Switzerland 22–25 April 2001.

At the end of the year 2000, the following countries were affiliated:

Full membership—Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America.

Associate Members—Australia, Chile, Italy, Hungary, South Africa, Romania.

Individual Members—Canada, Egypt, Greece, Latvia, Ukraine.

This unique multi-disciplinary organisation will continue to work for the expansion of high quality ambulatory surgery world-wide, especially to those countries that have not yet developed this important procedural service. The achievement of its objectives largely depends on the development of excellent communication channels and to this end has formulated its own website www.iaas-med.org.

Ambulatory surgery will continue to expand and the formation of the International Association for Ambulatory Surgery will be recognised as one of the great initiatives in the achievement of its potential.

Council of Presidents,

International Association for Ambulatory Surgery,

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