



Thoughts on possible changes to the Society's membership and benevolent activities

Those of you who have read my previous reports to the AGM over the last three years will be aware that I have emphasized the need to increase the membership numbers of the Society. Along with the rest of the management committee I have also been concerned with the need to find ways of increasing the level of our benevolent activity.

At the last AGM (10th June 2009) the following resolution was unanimously approved (Minute 10.10): "The committee be asked to move forward in principle to identify either a change to the existing Friendly Society structure or to adopt some other structure that is more advantageous so that an expansion of a class of beneficiaries and activities might be adopted".

In the wake of this a subcommittee was formed to develop these ideas. It has since met three times, as well as holding discussions at the University of East Anglia. The membership is: myself (retired geriatrician), Chris Hutchinson (GP, Norwich), Freddie McKenzie (retired dermatologist and past chairman) and Peter Prinsley (ENT consultant NNUH), with Philip Norton (Partner, Hansells Solicitors – Society chief executive) in attendance and advising.

We feel the time is appropriate to brief the general membership on our work to date and to seek comment on it.

1) Possible introduction of a new category of associate membership: It is clear from our meetings with senior university staff that, each year, a few cases of very severe financial hardship occur amongst medical students, threatening their continuing studies and future careers. The Society could assist such students, by establishing a total annual bursary fund probably of the order of £3000 - £5000. This would require a drive to recruit students to the membership, at a reduced subscription, without voting rights and a restricted eligibility to claim support, e.g. admitted from their 2nd year, and eligible for award from their 4th onwards. Such associate members would eventually be able to proceed to full membership on registration (in 2008, 56% of the graduating year began their first clinical posts in Norfolk).

We feel it is likely that such a scheme would be attractive to students and there are very efficient existing procedures in the Dean of Students' office to identify individuals in great need.

The present robust state of the Society's finances mean that such financial grants would provide no detriment to existing members or possible claimants. The sub-committee wishes to stress this reassurance to members.

2) Identification of unknown need in, or help to, existing members: during our discussions on 1) above we recognized that there are probably some of our existing members, or their dependants, who would be equally worthy of financial help from the Society, but whose needs, for various reasons, are not known to us. These might include significant difficulties in supporting student children, and not necessarily restricted to those studying medicine. We would encourage anyone who feels that they, or a member whose details are known to them, approach myself or any other member of the general management committee (see the website for current composition – www.nnbms.org.uk) to discuss matters in confidence. It is also my intention to write separately to widows and widowers of deceased members to remind them that they may continue to call on the support of the Society.

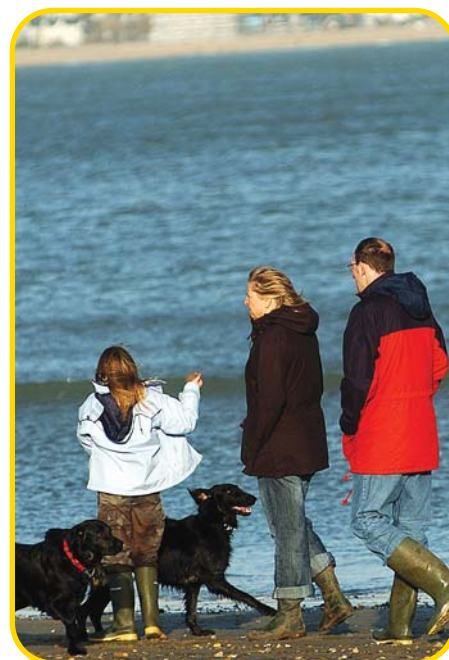
3) General ongoing efforts to recruit new members: finally, a reminder of the need for existing members to encourage colleagues to join us wherever possible. You may recall the suggestion in my 2009 AGM report that a simple target of persuading just one new recruit each would be of great value in securing the continuing healthy growth of the Society. Our work lies mainly in assisting in cases of unexpected illness or injury, particularly in younger or middle-aged individuals, where no alternative provision has been made or is otherwise available. For the happy majority of us for whom these circumstances do not actually arise then the appeal is that of traditional altruistic support for others within the profession not so fortunate.

In summary, I very much hope that any of you with constructive criticism or alternative ideas to those outlined above will contact me or my colleagues, to assist us in our further work in the coming months. It is our intention to present the general membership with the finalized details of our conclusions and recommendations by the spring of 2010, for a full postal ballot on them. The results of this would then be put to the subsequent June AGM to confirm any appropriate action.



Brian Payne
Chairman, N&NBMS

26/1/10



The AGM is expected to be 8th June at BUPA. Formal notice will follow and details will be on our website