



THE HARVEIAN SOCIETY OF LONDON

REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2020

President:

DR ELIZABETH PRICE MB BS DCH FRCPath

President Elect:

DR PHILIP IND MA FRCP

Introduction By The President

The coronavirus pandemic has meant that the year 2020 has been challenging for the Society. We managed to have 3 meetings on site at Lettsom House, then the rest of our meetings had to be continued on Zoom. Suddenly, we all had to become much more computer literate than we had been previously. Some meetings were rescheduled and two speakers were unable to lecture, as they were unexpectedly needed to cover other medical duties. We were very grateful to the lecturers, Prof Helen Bedford and Professor David Healy, who stepped in to give these two talks on Zoom. It was impressive that for our first Zoom meeting, Prof Healy was speaking to us from Canada. In October, we were saddened by the death of our lecturer, Dr Eddie Josse who was a long standing member of the Society. We were grateful to Dr Waney Squier for kindly agreeing to give the October lecture.

In spite of these difficulties, attendance at meetings has been increasing as we became more familiar with Zoom. Later in the year, we offered our sister societies, the Medical Society of London and Hunterian Society, the opportunity of joining our Zoom meetings.

The Society's annual visit in June to process to William Harvey's statue in Folkestone had to be cancelled because of the pandemic but the Mayor of Folkestone kindly laid a wreath at the statue on our behalf.

Our annual Buckston Browne - Gray Hill dinner (which was to have been at the Savile Club) had to be cancelled. Instead we had a Buckston Browne - Gray Hill Celebration Afternoon on Zoom. We were delighted to have 2 most distinguished and entertaining speakers. The first talk was given by His Honour Barrington Black. Barrington was for many years a UK criminal defence lawyer involved in high profile cases, including that of the serial killer Donald Neilson (also known as the Black Panther). Later, Barrington became a Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate and Circuit Judge in the Crown Court. His book, entitled 'Both Sides of the Bench', charted his life, legal and judicial progress and his contributions as legal expert to the media. The title of his talk was 'Illegal thoughts on Legal Matters.'

The second speaker was Sir John Meurig-Thomas, former director of the Royal Institution, the Davy-Faraday Research laboratories and former Master of Peterhouse, the oldest college in Cambridge. His biography of Michael Faraday has been translated into many languages and his latest book 'Architects of Structural Biology' is about the scientists Bragg, Hodgkin, Kendrew and Perutz (all Nobel laureates), whose work transformed modern medicine. Sir John was knighted for services to chemistry and the popularisation of science. The Royal Society awarded him their Royal Medal for his contributions to green chemistry and clean technology. In 2016, the JMT Medal (John Meurig Thomas medal) was launched and is awarded every year to a person working in the UK on catalysis. A mineral has been named after Sir John – meurigite -- a hydrated potassium iron phosphate found in only a few locations worldwide. Amazingly, he still has time for hobbies, including studying ancient civilisations, bird watching and Welsh literature. At the end of his talk, Sir John proposed the health of the Harveian Society of London.

The Christmas party on Zoom was a novel event, even though most of the performances had to be recorded. Our executive secretary, Mike Flynn amazed us by appearing in a completely different role as the conductor of a large choir for which he had composed several songs, including a COVID Christmas carol! Other contributors included members of the Society: Prof Robert Douglas (Trustee and President 2006) recited the poem 'The night before Christmas', Dr Robin Knill-Jones (President 2019) educated us about moths and Dr David Shanson told some new and old jokes. In addition, stories were told by Professor Harold Ellis and Dr Harri Jenkins. There were songs from Oscar Castellino, professional baritone, and the singing sisters, Sarah & Esther Shanson; Tanya Houghton, professional harpist and niece of Ivan Houghton, President of the Medical Society of London, played some lovely pieces on the harp; jazz pianist, Sean Hargreaves played a variety of piano pieces and some Christmas music from his studio.

We have been enormously saddened by the deaths of some of our members. Our trustee and past President, Dr David Siegler, died suddenly in September 2020. Dr Bill Frankland, pioneer of clinical allergy, passed away at the age of 108. Professor Oscar Craig (former president), Professor Lindsay Symon (former president), Dr Barry Hoffbrand (former President), Dr Eddie Josse and Dr John Manners also died recently. We miss them all and have observed moments of silence at our meetings in their memory.

William Harvey would have understood our present 'lock down' situation as he was himself detained in quarantine in northern Italy in 1636. This was as part of the measures to prevent the spread of bubonic plague. He found the experience extremely frustrating and initially refused all polite requests from officials that he must enter the quarantine house. Then he was threatened by men with muskets who rather forced the issue! Fortunately, after a few weeks he was rescued by the English ambassador. At least we don't have to face muskets in lockdown in London.

Finally, I want to give my most sincere thanks to our executive secretary, Mike Flynn, for brilliantly organising our Zoom meetings over the year. He has given us instructions on how to manage Zoom and encouraged us to keep working at it, even when we encountered inevitable occasional problems. Many thanks also to Betty Smallwood for carrying on her work for the Society, both at home and on site, in spite of the pandemic. Also, thanks to Leon Yhip for continuing to look after the fabric of Lettsom House in the absence of the meetings which used to take place there. Sadly, we have not seen our wonderful caterer Celia Butler and her staff, since March 2020. We hope we will be able to queue up for their delicious suppers again soon – many members are particularly suffering from the lack of Celia's bread and butter pudding! Best wishes to you all for 2021 and let us hope that later this year, we will be able to resume our meetings on site at Lettsom House.

DR ELIZABETH PRICE MB BS DCH FRCPath

Meeting of the Harveian Society

Held on Wednesday 8 January 2020

The Harveian Lecture

The President welcomed guests and reminded those present that this was a private meeting.

Dr Gerald Bridge was elected to membership as proposed by Dr Joanna Brown and Dr Philip Ind.

Mr Michael Beverley signed the Obligation Book and was admitted to the Society.

The President announced that the next meeting of the Society would take place on Wednesday 12 February 2020 when Professor Peter Wilson would lecture the Society.

The President then introduced Professor Mark Isalan and invited him to give the Harveian Lecture entitled

FROM GENE SWITCHES TO GENE THERAPY: ZINC FINGERS AND CRISPR

The Lecture was a clear, erudite presentation summarising the recent revolution in molecular techniques and genetic engineering. It discussed gene editing with the use of Zinc fingers and CRISPR/Cas 9 (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) 'molecular scissors' for removal or insertion of DNA in the genome. Professor Isalan discussed ethical issues surrounding CRISPR and the induction of germ line mutations; highlighted by the recent trial and imprisonment of the Chinese scientist He Jiankui for medically unjustified interventions in twin girl embryos. Despite potential risks, the enormous potential of these techniques is being explored in clinical trials in various diseases.

Questions were asked by Dr Shanson, Dr Wright and Dr Ind.

A Vote of Thanks was given by Dr Sarraf.

44 Members and Guests Attended

Minutes of the Meeting of the Harveian Society

Held on Wednesday 12 February 2020

The President welcomed guests and reminded those present that this was a private meeting.

The President announced the death of former President Dr Oscar Craig, members stood for a moment in his memory.

Dr Spyros Retsas and Dr Patricia Kenny were elected to membership, both as proposed by The President.

Ms Marilyn Davey, Miss Hilary Hiscocks and Dr Spyros Retsas and Dr Patricia Kenny signed the Obligation Book and were admitted to the Society.

The President announced that the next meeting of the Society would take place on Wednesday 11 March 2020 when Professor Klim McPherson would lecture the Society.

The President then introduced Professor Peter Wilson and invited him to give his lecture entitled

ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE – FUTURE APOCALYPSE?

Professor Peter Wilson comprehensively summarised the importance of increasing antibiotic resistance particularly among carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae some of which are becoming untreatable. The importance of Infection control measures in preventing multidrug resistance, the place of surveillance and screening, were also discussed. Personal protective equipment was sometimes indicated eg recently for Covid 19 but standard infection control, particularly hand hygiene was essential.

The basic principles of short courses of high doses of narrow spectrum antibiotics and reduction of meropenem and piptazobactam prescribing were emphasised. The emergence of pan-resistant gram negative bacteria would require combinations of older antibiotics, screening, and sequence typing to track outbreaks. There was lively discussion of the practical difficulties of bacteriophages, dentist antibiotic prescribing, the downsides of chlorinated chicken etc.

Questions were asked by Dr Ferguson, Dr Shanson, Professor Sears and Dr Carter

A vote of was proposed by Dr Shanson

57 Members and Guests Attended

Meeting of the Harveian Society

Held on Wednesday 11 March 2020

The President welcomed guests and reminded those present that this was a private meeting.

Professor Gordon Rustin signed the Obligation Book and was admitted to the Society.

The President announced that the next meeting of the Society would take place on Wednesday 8 April 2020 when Professor Helen Bedford would lecture the Society.

The President then introduced Professor Klim McPherson and invited him to give his lecture entitled

HRT AND HORMONAL CONTRACEPTIVES. HOW REAL ARE THE RISKS?

Professor Klim McPherson discussed the pros and cons of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) in post-menopausal women. Symptomatic benefit is undisputed. Large, placebo controlled, clinical trials overturned evidence from early, observational studies. The Women's Health Initiative, was stopped prematurely

because of an excess of invasive breast cancer. There were also significant increases in coronary heart disease and stroke, as well as venous thromboembolic disease. The Million Women Study confirmed an increase in breast cancer, greater with longer treatment, though risk declined markedly soon after discontinuation of HRT. Definite benefits of treatment on osteoporosis, hip fracture and a reduction in colon cancer are well established, The undoubted risk of developing breast cancer with HRT needs to be put in context with other risk factors and weighed against the benefits of treatment in counselling an individual woman.

Questions were asked by Dr Angus-Leppan, Professor Rustin, Dr O'Brien, Dr Ind, Dr Newton, Dr Price and Dr Knill-Jones

A vote of was proposed by Dr Helen Graham

43 Members and Guests Attended

Meeting of the Harveian Society

Held on Wednesday 20 May 2020

The President welcomed guests to the Zoom Meeting and reminded those present that this was a private meeting.

The President announced that the next meeting of the Society would take place on Wednesday 3 June 2020 when, instead of the Annual Dinner, His Honor Barrington Black QC and Sir John Meurig Thomas FRS would lecture the Society.

The President then introduced Professor David Healy FRCPsych and invited him to give his lecture entitled

PROBLEMS WITH RANDOMISED CLINICAL TRIALS – ‘DOES MY BIAS LOOK BIG IN THIS?’

In a very entertaining and stimulating, pioneering, Zoom presentation ‘Does my bias look big in this?’ Professor David Healy illustrated many of the caveats of pharmaceutical company-sponsored randomised controlled clinical trials (RCTs) with particular reference to the treatment of severe and moderate depression with antidepressants.

He focused on imipramine, paroxetine and serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). He stressed the importance of the deliberate confounding of adverse effects with features of the clinical condition: particularly for example with respect to suicidal acts. He emphasised that RCTs were not the only way of determining efficacy and were poor at determining adverse effects (and could be manipulated to ‘hide them’).

Anecdotal reports could then prove valuable. He criticised ‘ghost writing’ involving clinical academics, the bureaucracy and regulatory inaction of the European Medicines Agency. Professor Healy only rather modestly mentioned his efforts to counter false reporting and disavowal of serious adverse effects by drug companies (see his website RxRISK).

A vote of was proposed by The President

30 Members and Guests Attended

Meeting of the Harveian Society

Held on Wednesday 24 June 2020

The President welcomed guests to the Zoom Meeting and reminded those present that this was a private meeting.

The President announced that the next meeting of the Society would take place on Wednesday 14 October 2020 when, Dr Waney Squier would lecture the Society.

The President then introduced Professor Helen Bedford and invited her to give her lecture entitled

VACCINE CONFIDENCE – DON'T MAKE A CRISIS OUT OF A DRAMA

Professor Helen Bedford's interesting, talk, by Zoom, on 'Vaccine confidence -don't make a crisis out of a drama' focused on childhood, particularly measles, immunisation. In the UK, measles was regarded as 'eliminated' (ie contained) in 2017, but a 5-fold increase in cases was recorded by 2019. World-wide, measles increased 300% in 2019.

The widely publicised MMR scare occurred in 2002, however, over 75% of the population, world-wide, are vaccine confident. Vaccine 'hesitancy', the opposite of vaccine confidence; delay in acceptance, or refusal, was identified as the top threat to global health in 2019. Vaccine hesitancy is complex; involving a specific context (time, place and vaccine) and relating to complacency regarding the illness, lack of vaccine confidence and convenience of immunisation.

The main reasons for non- or partial immunisation relate to beliefs and attitudes, medical concerns and practical issues eg moving house. Large families, recent immigrants, children in care, or with chronic health problems, or minority ethnic groups were the most likely to have problems related to access or education issues. In surveys, many parents felt that they did not receive adequate information and that healthcare providers were too rushed to listen to their concerns and supply adequate information. Most were wary of the 'dangers' of social media and the internet.

Anti-vaxxers were not currently a major factor in non-immunisation in the UK (unlike in the USA). Only about 2% of the population reject all vaccines. Effective strategies to counter anti-vaxxer propaganda, to allay the doubts and fears of the hesitant, are necessary to help parents with complex, multidimensional vaccination decisions.

A vote of thanks was proposed by The President

54 Members and Guests Attended

Meeting of the Harveian Society

Held on Wednesday 14 October 2020

The President welcomed guests to the Zoom Meeting and reminded those present that this was a private meeting.

The President announced that the next meeting of the Society would take place on Wednesday 11 November 2020 when, following the AGM, The President would deliver her Presidential Address.

The President then introduced Dr Waney Squier and invited her to give her lecture entitled

WHY ARE WE STILL TALKING ABOUT THE SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME?

Dr Waney Squier gave an absorbing lecture, by Zoom. She drew on her long experience as a Consultant Paediatric Neuropathologist and Expert Witness to present an authoritative, convincing account challenging the previously, conventional view of this syndrome. This recognised the triad of encephalopathy, subdural haematoma and retinal haemorrhages as the hallmarks of 'Shaken Baby syndrome' (SBS) now better called Non-Accidental Head Injury (NAHI).

She detailed a celebrated case, in which she had testified for the prosecution, with the mother's conviction for manslaughter. This was later over-turned on appeal. Dr Squier, as a result of review of nearly 50 years of research, changed her view of a diagnosis she now found flawed and she was instrumental in the acquittal. She and other 'denialist experts' suffered vilification. She was 'struck off' the register by the GMC. However, on appeal, she had her License to practice restored and was honoured as the 2016 Champion of Justice.

She summarised the scientific literature from the 1970s to a Swedish 2018 systematic review. She concluded that the 'accepted hypothesis' of shaking as a cause of the classical triad was supported by only 2 studies employing confessions. Autopsy evidence suggested that hypoxia, with or without infection, could produce the triad. Biomechanical data e.g. from crash test dummies suggested that shaking alone does not cause subdural or retinal haemorrhages without blunt trauma (e.g. the baby's head striking the crib).

Recently, there has been wider acceptance that the classical triad can occur naturally and that NAHI is likely only when there is other evidence of trauma. By and large, Criminal Courts have accepted this while the Family Courts have not. Dr Squier calls the SBS hypothesis 'a travesty of Science and a mockery of the Legal system'. It has become impossible to find Expert witnesses to testify in defence of these cases. There remain very entrenched opinions and attempts at Consensus meetings, adequately representing both sides of the arguments, have failed.

A vote of was proposed by The President

63 Members and Guests Attended

Meeting of the Harveian Society

Held on Wednesday 11 November 2020

The President welcomed guests to the Zoom Meeting and reminded those present that this was a private meeting.

The President announced that the next meeting of the Society would take place on Wednesday 16 December 2020 when there would be an evening of online Christmas entertainment.

The President then delivered her Presidential Address:

SEPSIS – SOME CHALLENGING PATIENT PROBLEMS

Dr Elizabeth Price gave her Presidential Address, she presented a number of interesting case reports, gathered throughout her career as a microbiologist, together with historical vignettes yielding clinical and scientific nuggets.

The series of clinical histories included a child with fever (meningococcal meningitis), a child with a painful arm (salmonella osteomyelitis), a child with a rash (eczema herpeticum), 3 children with diarrhoea and a water-borne outbreak.

The first child with diarrhoea proved to have Yersinia enterocolitica; its growth and pathogenicity enhanced by utilisation of the iron bound to desferrioxamine (used for chelation therapy for the child's thalassaemia). The 2 others had complicated Clostridiodes difficile infection, un-related to antibiotic therapy; pseudomembranous colitis related to Hirschsprung's and severe diarrhoea related to parental supply of piperzolate bromide.

A waterborne outbreak on a neonatal Intensive Care Unit was identified as due to antibiotic-resistant *Pseudomonas* and *Chryseobacterium* related to sink taps. Implementing the use of sterile water successfully resolved the problem. However, an outbreak recurred a few years later. This was traced to the use of tap water to warm the cold sterile water used for cleaning the neonates and a bottle warming cabinet proved the solution.

This was a masterly and timely summary of the ongoing clinical importance and conundra posed by sepsis. We were reminded that in the future, as in the current coronavirus pandemic, new organisms and new presentations would undoubtedly provide further new challenges.

A vote of thanks was proposed by the President elect, Dr Philip Ind.

63 Members and Guests Attended

President-Elect Designate: DR DAVID TREACHER MA FRCP

Vice Presidents: DR ROBIN KNILL-JONES MA MSc FRCP FRCPE
DR ELIZABETH PRICE MB BS DCH FRCPPath

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