



12th April 2016

Dear SRF member,

During the second half of 2015, and as outlined at the AGM last year, the SRF Council undertook a consultation exercise to gauge members' opinions on the future of conferences funded and organised by the SRF. This referendum arose from comments expressed by Society members in the earlier Strategic Review consultation; several members had highlighted concerns at the scale of the recurrent subsidy that the SRF provides to its annual summer meeting (c.£40,000 per annum) and expressed a preference for increased numbers of joint meetings (subject to the caveats that we [i] take steps to maintain the relatively low cost and welcoming atmosphere characteristic of SRF meetings and [ii] continue to support early career members of the Society).

In the follow up referendum, undertaken to determine support for 3 possible options for the future organisation of SRF meetings, members were asked to vote on the following three options:

1. Continuing with a stand-alone SRF annual conference plus SRF participation in the biennial joint Fertility meetings (collaborative with other UK fertility societies);
2. A move to annual joint Fertility meetings with a biennial stand-alone SRF conference held in alternate years;
3. A move to annual joint Fertility meetings with the possibility of smaller, focused, SRF-funded workshops run in the summer.

84 members (c.30% of the SRF membership) voted in this referendum and the Council would like to take this opportunity to thank those members who responded to the consultation.

The results of the referendum were as follows:

- Option 1: 27.4% (23 votes)

- Option 2: 36.9% (31 votes)
- Option 3: 35.7% (30 votes)

The majority of respondents (>72%) supported Options 2 or 3, a move to the SRF participating in annual Fertility meetings, with each of Options 2 and 3 being preferred by respondents over Option 1 (maintenance of the status quo).

The results of this vote, and their broader implications for members and for the Society, were considered at length and in detail by SRF Council in late 2015. After due consideration and discussion, SRF Council has opted to move forward with Option 3. (Although Option 2 was arguably the preferred option of respondents, Council noted that this option presents significant logistic challenges with respect to scheduling the Society's AGM, prize sessions and speaker exchange programmes with our international sister societies: SRB and SSR. Option 2 would also result in three major meetings [two joint Fertility conferences and a full SRF stand-alone conference] occurring within a 13 month period in alternate years, potentially over-stretching the number of delegates and quantity of research to the detriment of any one meeting.)

From January 2017, SRF will participate in annual joint Fertility meetings with the British Fertility Society (BFS) and the Association of Clinical Embryologists (ACE). In addition, SRF will provide funds to support the organisation of smaller summer workshops by SRF members. The intention is to trial Option 3 for three years in the first instance, and to assess the success of this initiative at the SRF Council meeting in autumn 2019.

In reaching this decision, Council recognises members' concerns regarding [i] the potential loss of the SRF's identity and [ii] the substantial cost of attending the joint Fertility meetings. To address the first of these concerns, the Council is committed to ensuring that the joint meetings can maintain the traditional features and characteristics of SRF conferences that we have enjoyed over the years, including award lectures and various prizes to support members, particular in their early careers. On the issue of cost, the SRF Officers are working with their counterparts in ACE and BFS to review registration fees for the joint conferences and will also be putting in place a package of financial support to assist members' attendance at the joint meetings. (The details of these packages are currently being finalised and more information will be released ahead of this year's SRF AGM).

We hope that members will be supportive of these changes to SRF conferences which should allow SRF members to benefit from exposure to a wider range of reproductive biology research including more translational aspects to run alongside basic science. The high levels of commercial sponsorship and trade income to the joint Fertility meetings will offset the recurrent expenditure of SRF funds on stand-alone annual conferences and so permit Council to redirect

the £40,000 annual expenditure to increase support for Society members through the SRF grant schemes. This will also allow the Society to offer financial support for smaller, focused workshops in the summer months, furthering the SRF mission to support our community.

As indicated above, Council will keep the success of this change to SRF meetings under review and will formally re-assess the future organisation of SRF conferences in 2019, by which time we will have a few years of experience to consider.

We look forward, hopefully, to seeing you at this year's annual conference in Winchester in July.

Best wishes,

Dr Tony Michael

*SRF Chair*

Dr Andrew Childs

*SRF Business Secretary*

Dr Franchesca Houghton

*SRF Programme Secretary*

Prof Tom Fleming

*SRF Treasurer*