



Society for Reproduction and Fertility

58th Annual General Meeting of the Society for Reproduction and Fertility
Main Auditorium
Edinburgh International Conference Centre
13.00-13.45 hrs, Thursday 5 January 2017

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Dr A E Michael(Chairman), Prof T P Fleming(Treasurer), Dr F Houghton (Programme Secretary), Dr R Robertson (Vice Chair and Membership Secretary)

and members of the Society: Robert Abayasekara, Cheryl Ashworth, Megan Brown, Jose Buratini, Inchul Choi, Amanda De Mestre, Alireza Fazeli, Mark Fenwick, Greg Fitzharris, Ali Fouladi-Nashta, Doug Gibson, Selene Jarrett, Keith Jones, Richard Lea, Belinda Lo, David Miller, Elena Papadopoulou, Chris Price, Bob Robertson, Helena Rodriguez Caro, Olivier Sandra, Sairah Sheikh, Norah Spears, Thomas Spencer, Claire Stenhouse, Kacie Thomson, Charlotte Walker, Adam Watkins, Xi Wei, Nick Wheelhouse, Suzannah Williams, Katie Woad, Maureen Wood

In attendance: Jacinta Scannell (The Conference Collective, SRF Secretariat).

58.1 Apologies for Absence – there were no apologies noted.

58.2 Minutes of the 57th Annual General Meeting held at University of Winchester on 12 July 2016

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

Proposed by Susannah Williams and seconded by Katie Woad.

58.2.1 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

58.3 Update on Society Accounts for 2015

The Treasurer presented the final audited accounts for 2015 covering income and expenditure. The audited accounts were accepted by the AGM.

Proposed by Cheryl Ashworth and seconded by Adam Watkins.

58.4 Presentation of Management Accounts for 2016

The Treasurer presented the draft management accounts for 2016. There were no questions and the draft accounts were accepted by the AGM.

58.5 Chair's report

The Chairperson, Dr A E Michael, presented his detailed report that had been pre-circulated to the Meeting.

In the 6 months that have elapsed since the 57th AGM (Winchester, July 2016), the focus of SRF Council has been almost exclusively on developing new funding schemes, planning for WCRB2017

and planning for future joint Fertility conferences. He was pleased to report that despite offering a range of generous travel grants and bursaries offered to members to attend Fertility, it is still expected that the conference will return a healthy surplus for reinvestment in support of the Society's mission.

As a consequence of the special resolution passed at the 57th AGM, no members of SRF Council will be standing down at the current AGM. A number of vacancies will arise on the Council in January 2018 and nominations will be called for in advance. Members were encouraged to consider standing for these positions.

The Chair expressed his thanks to Conference Collective for providing increasingly effective support to members and for helping to make the transition in service from PCS to CCL as smooth as possible.

Kevin Sinclair will be standing down as Editor in Chief of the Journal *Reproduction* and a new editor will be announced shortly.

Professor Richard Sharpe will provide an interesting and stimulating lecture in the Sex in Three cities series this year.

There were no formal questions and the report was accepted by the AGM.

58.6 Vice-Chair and Membership Secretary report

The Vice-Chair, Dr R Robinson, presented his report to the Meeting. Membership now stood at 383 members due to enhanced support in the form of increased travel grants and bursaries. Sixty two percent of the membership is from UK with remainder from overseas. Dr Robinson extended the Council's thanks to the Conference Collective for producing membership numbers that the Society can have a high degree of confidence in. It was also good to note that a large number of members have already renewed for 2017. Whilst most members used the on-line facility to pay their membership dues by credit or debit card, the option of offering direct debit payment facilities will be explored for next year.

The report was accepted by the AGM.

58.7 Treasurer's report

Prof T P Fleming reported that the Society has assets of £1.6m in Credit Suisse compared to previous years. 2016 has been a good year as Brexit has helped with the return on foreign investments. M&G Charifund has also made good returns. Funds from NSL will be invested into M&G Charifund when the NSL account is closed.

Over a number of years, the Society has had a very stable and strong capital base to support its charitable activities and net assets for 2016 stand at £1.9m. The main source of income is *Reproduction*, and £122,000 was achieved in first 9 months of 2016, compared to £168,000 for full year in 2015. In previous years, the journal was not so profitable and the new agreement with the publisher has proved to be a very positive move for the financial security of the Society. The Treasurer summarised the scholarships, travel grants and bursaries that were provided in 2016. Despite increasing the overall level of sponsorship in 2016, this has not had an impact on the overall balance of funds. The support to the value of £53,000 awarded to 75 members to attend Fertility has proved to be a very good investment and means that SRF attendance has been the highest ever achieved. Looking at overall finances for Winchester, the Treasurer reported that the 2016 annual meeting cost the Society £55,000 and in 2015 the annual meeting cost £40,000.

As a consequence of the Fertility meeting, the Society's share of the surplus is expected to be approximately £25,000. With a strong capital base, SRF is now able to provide increased support for more members. In addition to organising past events and awarding grants, there are plans to

offer academic scholarships for early career members although this is still under discussion. Full details for stand-alone SRF funded and supported workshops will also be announced with various options for members to deliver these events to support our activities. Details of bursaries to support SRF members to attend WCRB in Japan will also be announced following the SRF Council meeting scheduled for 6th January 2017.

Keith Jones raised a question about funding summer vacation scholarships. In response, it was noted that not all applications are always appropriate but the Society is willing to extend the numbers that are funded and to review the rules that prohibit some applications.

58.8 General Secretary's Report

Dr A Watkins advised members that under the Society's Academic Scholarship programme, previously it was well established academics who benefited from these scholarships. The Society is currently developing Early Career Development scholarships of £12,500 for candidates at the start of their career and full details will be available later in 2017. We are also looking at return to work scholarships for those who have taken parental leave etc. All applications will be reviewed and there will not be a limit on the number to be considered.

The SRF Council is also trying to gather more information from awardees on how the receipt of SRF funds have benefited them and where it has led them in their career. This will help make the output and impact of awards more evident for members.

Award applicants are marked purely on merit and members were encouraged to apply when applications open at the end of January. Travel awards are now based on the distance travelled rather than a set amount. Last year 19 grants in total were funded based on a scoring system and not a specific number. Members were invited to make suggestions on ways to offer more benefits to the membership.

Keith Jones expressed concern about the amount of money offered for academic scholarships that compete with much wealthier organisations who have deeper pockets. A relatively small number of individuals benefit when the funds could be used to benefit more members. The number of applications indicate that there is still a need for *established* members of the society. The Treasurer responded that he felt it was better to have a broad array of funding available to support applications that are central to SRF's mission. He also noted that the funding offered by SRF is often used to cover consumables etc. but it is important that SRF funds are not used to cover university costs. All of the grants and awards are passed through a strategic review. Norah Spears argued for the return to research scholarships, where a higher amount is available to a smaller number of recipients.

Sairah Sheikh suggested that travel grants should be based on where people are working and not where they live.

The General Secretary's report was accepted by the AGM.

58.9 Programme Secretary's Report

Dr F Houghton expressed her thanks to the programme committee who have worked on the annual meeting, Fertility and WCRB this year. She said that scientific excellence is our driving force and she invited feedback from members on the selection of speakers or topics that would be of interest at future meetings.

Fertility has received the largest number of abstracts with an increase of 150 over Fertility 2015. There was representation from 25 countries. This included 93 SRF members in attendance which is a huge increase from 2015. It has been agreed that SRF Exchange lectures will be held over until 2018 when winners from 2016 annual conferences will be invited to deliver their talks.

The next WCRB will be held in Japan from 27-29 September 2017 and the programme will be available by end of January. Professor Tom Fleming will be the SRF plenary speaker. Other symposia speakers will be announced by end of January. Fertility 2018 will take place in Liverpool in January 2018.

Cheryl Ashworth asked whether the criteria to decide on continuing with a joint fertility meeting or a stand-alone SRF Meeting would be based on finance or something else. In response, the Chair confirmed that SRF is committed to the joint meeting until 2020. The number of members who attend and the benefit to members will be considered as part of the review of the joint meeting. It was noted that SRF had the highest number of free oral presentations from the 3 societies presented at Fertility 2017.

Greg Fitzharris commented that the current attendance numbers at Fertility suggest that the same number of members are benefiting with 93 in attendance at this meeting compared to the numbers who normally attended the annual meeting.

Keith Jones asked how any exit from Fertility would be negotiated if that was desirable. The Chair explained that there would not be an instantaneous turnaround in January 2020 but the Memorandum of Understanding with other societies will be regularly reviewed. The 2018 AGM will enable us to gauge the success. At the appropriate time, a referendum will be arranged to ask the membership for feedback and to help develop a strategy on how to proceed.

58.10 Election of Honorary Members

The Chair proposed that Richard Sharpe, who will be presenting the 2017 Sex in Three Cities lecture series is awarded Honorary Membership of the Society.

He also proposed that Professor Steve Hillier be awarded Honorary membership as his contribution to the field is at a level that is entirely appropriate for this award.

No opposition was recorded and both nominees were accepted as worthy recipients.

58.11 Any Other Business

There was no other business and the meeting was declared closed.