

## 5th ALPS Meeting Madonna di Campiglio 27th - 31st January 2010

Surgeons from Europe and across the world retreated to the village of Madonna di Campiglio in the Italian Dolomites for the 5th Alpine Liver and Pancreatic Surgery (ALPS) meeting. This gathering constituted a forum for updates and subsequent discussion of pertinent topics, ranging from the basic science that underpins hepatobiliary and pancreatic disease, to advances in surgical technique and adjuvant treatment.

Professor Yuji Nimura (Nagoya University Hospital, Japan), the current president of the IHPBA, opened the meeting with a superb lecture on advanced resectional techniques for challenging cases of hilar cholangiocarcinoma. With several lectures and video presentations over the course of the meeting, Professor Nimura conveyed the importance of advanced, multi-modality imaging as a pre-requisite for designing resections of both biliary and liver malignancies, and shared his vast experience and expertise in this field.

Professor Dirk Gouma (Academic Medical Centre, Amsterdam) delivered a series of lectures on the surgical options and resulting complications of pancreatic, duodenal and ampullary lesions. Particularly impressive was the number of important clinical questions that he and his Dutch collaborators have answered and continue to address through high-quality clinical trials.

Dr David Tuveson (Medical Oncology, Cambridge) discussed the histological explanations for resistance to chemotherapy in pancreatic cancer, offering possible therapeutic strategies to enhance efficacy. He also gave an eloquent overview of the relevance of tumour genotyping to predict treatment response, highlighting the lessons learned from colorectal cancer. Professor Andrew Biankin (Sydney, Australia) in his lecture outlined his vision for individualising treatment of pancreatic cancer based on biomarkers known to predict response.

The participation of our local Italian colleagues was appreciated, with Professor Alfred Guglielmi (Verona) comparing the management of cholangiocarcinoma in Japan with that in Europe, and Professor Claudio Bassi (Verona), in his capacity as the president of the EHPBA, updating the audience on the organisation's progress, development of a European qualification in HPB surgery and future plans. The contribution of Professor James Garden (Edinburgh) to the success of the HPB journal was acknowledged. In other sessions, Mr Rowan Parks (Edinburgh) discussed complications of pancreatitis, Mr Hassan Malik (Liverpool) described the experience of drug-eluting beads as a novel neoadjuvant approach for colorectal metastases, Ms Fenella Welsh (Basingstoke) reported on the early experience with microwave ablation for multifocal disease, Professor Brian Rowlands (Nottingham) talked on the challenges of fluid balance in HPB patients and Professor James Garden challenged the audience to consider which surgeons should be undertaking laparoscopic cholecystectomy.

The video and DVD session has become established as a very popular part of the scientific programme, allowing "tips and tricks" for novel or complex surgical techniques to be shared with other delegates. From laparoscopic liver resection to open liver resection with caval thrombectomy, presentations were of high-quality, both in terms of content and production.

In keeping with previous years, the meeting included trainee presentations that were of an excellent standard. The award for best scientific presentation went to Mr Andrew Robson (Edinburgh), for his work on the tumour microenvironment in cholangiocarcinoma. In the clinical category, Mr Peter Swan (Basingstoke) was particularly commended for his study into the effect of delayed resection of colorectal liver metastases on long-term survival.

Professor John Primrose (Southampton) and other faculty members discussed the progress and emerging results of UK-based clinical trials of both surgical and adjuvant treatment options (BilCAP, ABC-02/03, Photostent-02 and New-EPOC). It was encouraging to see the lead that the UK is taking in this area and, whilst the contribution of a number of units has been excellent, it is hoped that this session will have inspired other centres to participate and make these trials a success.

Skiing in Madonna di Campiglio is highly enjoyable for novice and expert skiers alike. With temperatures persistently sub-zero and a regular dusting of new snow overnight, we found the pistes in excellent condition. Clear blue skies afforded us impressive views of the surrounding Dolomites and ensured that many rosy faces appeared at the afternoon scientific sessions. Despite the distraction of the mesmerising views, lively discussion spilled over onto the chairlift, and the lunchtime "Meet the Experts" sessions in Cascina Zeledria were an opportunity for further sharing of opinions on the finer details of novel ablation techniques as well as the relative merits of Amarone, Barolo and Chianti.

As ever we were extremely grateful to our colleagues in industry (Acculis, SIRTEx and LOTUS) for their generous educational support of this meeting, allowing guest speakers to be invited from all corners of the world and providing bursaries for trainees wishing to attend the meeting. The organising committee, particularly Professor John Primrose and his team in Southampton, must be commended, both for putting together such an excellent programme and for ensuring the seamless logistical arrangements that allowed an almost unfeasible amount of science and skiing to be crammed into three days! There is no doubt that ALPS is emerging as one of the leading HPB meetings worldwide, attracting guest speakers and delegates from leading institutions, and the 2011 meeting is to be looked forward to with eager anticipation.

**Jenny Richards, Erica Revie, Andrew Robson, Edinburgh**