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AWARDEE REPORT FORM

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| NAME | | Professor Stephen McHanwell | | |
| UNIVERSITY | | Newcastle | | |
| NAME OF AWARD | | Symington Bequest Round 4 2017/18 | | |
| PURPOSE OF AWARD *conference attended (full name) with city and dates* | | | | |
| Attendance at the 52a Reunião Cientifica da Sociedade Anatomómica Portuguesa (SAP) e 5a Reunião Cientifica da Associação Anatomómica Portuguesa (AAP). Escola de Medicina, Universidade do Minho, Braga, Portugal, 26th May 2018 | | | | |
| REPORT: What were your anticipated benefits? | | | | |
| In accepting this invitation I was conscious that apart from through TEPARG I had never had an opportunity to engage with the Portuguese anatomical community and that this would provide a medium for exchange of ideas, identification of opportunities for collaboration and suggestions for future meetings. It was also one route to establishing a link between the Anatomical Society and its Portuguese counterpart. Since I was intending to use part of my keynote to talk about the AS Core Syllabus project it would also provide another opportunity for dissemination of that work. Finally, and entirely coincidentally, one of my colleagues in Medical Education is developing a collaboration with colleagues in the Medical School in the University of Minho so it also provided an opportunity to develop that collaboration further. | | | | |
| COMMENTS: Describe your experience at the conference / lab visit / course / seminar. | | | | |
| The 52nd Annual Meeting of the Portuguese Anatomical Society was held jointly with the 5th Annual Meeting of the Portuguese Anatomical Association in Braga, Portugal on 26th May 2018. This was an education-focussed meeting with an over-arching theme of “identifying new approaches to engage students in learning anatomy”. I had been invited to join the meeting as a keynote speaker. My brief was critically to review some of these new approaches from an international perspective. The meeting was in three parts with a series of short communications, a poster session and was concluded by my keynote presentation. The language of the meeting was, naturally, Portuguese, though speakers were encouraged, as in common in many meetings in Southern Europe particularly to present their slides in English. I have some limited knowledge of Portuguese which was sufficient, especially being familiar with the contexts being discussed, to follow the meeting in detail. As the meeting progressed it became apparent that many of the issues we are familiar with teaching anatomy in the UK are also being encountered in Portugal and indeed would be recognised in many countries in the world and can properly be regarded as being shared, international issues of anatomy pedagogy.  Communications on the effectiveness of special study projects in anatomy, engaging students to produce pedagogic resources for learning anatomy and provision of extracurricular opportunities to engage in dissection projects were key amongst the approaches that were found to be effective in engaging Portuguese students. Many of these would be methods familiar to us in the UK. While the use of computer-assisted technologies to support spatial learning, 3D printing and a neuroanatomical atlas produced with thin (5mm) plastinated sections of brain are also methods that have been employed variously in anatomy units across the UK. Alongside these similarities there were some very obvious differences in approach and emphasis to be observed. Students undertaking special study projects had ready access to funding support from a Portuguese Funding Council (GAPIC). The students were engaged actively in gross anatomical research in collaboration with staff with a clear expectation of eventual publication. This same Funding Council was also prepared to fund students engaged in pedagogic resource development and again dissemination locally but also nationally was the expectation. The ready availability of funding for undergraduate students to undertake projects for both anatomical research and education activities appeared to be an important factor in the success of these projects. Evidence was also presented to demonstrate longer-term benefits on student learning. Validated instruments measuring self-efficacy were used, to show the positive impacts for students of undertaking such activities as they continued their studies.  In my keynote lecture I elected to focus on topics that were not being discussed elsewhere in the sessions and I structured my presentation around the three topics of the place of knowledge in curriculum design in anatomy, the reward and recognition for teachers of anatomy and the need for a properly evidence-based approach to anatomy pedagogy. In recent years as anatomists we know that the subject of how much anatomy should be taught within medical and other healthcare professions programmes has been a matter of vigorous debate. One response has been the initiation by the Anatomical Society and by IFAA of a series of Delphi studies that have set out to answer these questions using a recognised research process to generate a consensus discussion. I argued in my talk as I have elsewhere, based upon the work of Young and others advocating a social realist approach, that knowledge matters in a curriculum. Delphi methodologies represent one route to developing coherent syllabuses which by equipping students with what Young has termed powerful knowledge both encourage deep learning and the capacity to for predictive knowledge. In many schools and departments of anatomy the teaching of the subject is being increasingly undertaken by education-focussed staff. In a paper in Clinical Anatomy in 2014 Bergman et al identified this trend arguing that the quality of teaching anatomy would be increasingly be dependent on their being adequate reward structures for anatomy teachers. I presented some of the work being done in this area on rewarding and recognising teaching intending to stimulate debate. Finally, I discussed the increasing importance being attached to evidence-based pedagogy as in other disciplines. As Tight in a recent paper in 2017 has shown there has been an explosion in Higher Education research being reported. Anatomy has probably one of the best-developed discipline-specific pedagogic research communities in the world. In common with a lot of HE research many of these studies are small scale, often based upon work in one institution and so have limited generalisability yet many of the studies reach similar conclusions. Drawing upon early work by Chickering and Gamson (1987) on the seven principles for effective learning I made a case that anatomy teaching as it is enacted in many places in the world follows nearly all of those principles. I went on to argue that grounding pedagogic research in the wider HE literature in this way is one means by which our work can rest on a firmer theoretical foundation. A lively discussion ensued especially around the subject of the AS core syllabus and considerable interest was shown in the use of the syllabus as a means to provide a coherent framework for the teaching of anatomy in case and scenario-based courses. In the discussion outside the meeting it was also that that issue of reward and recognition of teaching was as much an issue in Portugal as it is in the UK and elsewhere and that research dominates the agenda in Portugal.  Tight (2017) has suggested that given the explosion in HE publishing we may know all we need to know. This may or may not be true for anatomy or for any discipline. However, we can perhaps all agree with Tight’s thesis that there is an urgent need to synthesise our understandings of what constitutes effective pedagogy through meta-analyses and systematic reviews and also, I suggest through multi-centre studies. This meeting served to reinforce that view not least through identifying some potential collaborative work that could be undertaken. | | | | |
| REPORT: In relation to skills, what were the most important things you gained? *(does not apply to equipment grant)* | | | | |
| I am not sure that a gaining of skills is quite the right question for a visit such as this. What I would say, as I have described above, I have been reinforced in my view that many of the pedagogic issues we face as anatomists are shared international problems. The routes to more effective pedagogic anatomy research lies in strengthening its grounding more firmly in education theory but also in multi-centre and international studies and through meta-analyses of the kind undertaken by Hattie and through systematic reviews. Collaboration with colleagues in Portugal is already being explored. I consider too that a joint meeting with the Portuguese Society at a suitable point in the future is something for active exploration. | | | | |
| REPORT: How do you think you will put this learning experience into practice in the future? | | | | |
| In Newcastle we are now already actively exploring opportunities for collaboration with colleagues in the University of Minho and Lisbon where our pedagogic research interests are closely aligned. We have invited Portuguese colleagues to join our AS-funded seminar in Newcastle in July though at this short notice I am not sure if any will be able to attend. Should that be the case then a separate exchange visit will be organised. As a member of the AS meetings Committee I will want to suggest that we explore a joint meeting with the Portuguese Society possibly to include the Spanish Society where the Portuguese already have good links though with IFAA not far away this joint meeting will have to wait. | | | | |
| SIGNATURE |  | | DATE |  |

*If submitted electronically, a type-written name is acceptable in place of a hand-written signature*

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