

Minutes ISPGR teleconference

Date: February 20, 2010, 20.30 (UTC).

Submitted by: Sandy Brauer, Ph.D., ISPGR Secretary

Board Members present included: Executive Committee, elected

members: President Bas Bloem, Treasurer, Sharon Henry, Secretary, Sandy Brauer, Website coordinator, John Jeka, past organizers, Lorenzo Chiari (from 21.15), Jim Frank (immediate past president), Marjorie Woollacott, Fay Horak (past Presidents), elected Board Members, Emily Keshner, Brad McFadyen, Mark Carpenter, Vivienne Weerdesteyn. Apologies from future organizer, Kazuo Ishikawa, from Japan who has sent a document in lieu of attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 20:40 by President Bas Bloem. He welcomed all and began by indicating that we as a board have a tremendous opportunity to take a proactive rather than reactive role to take the ISPGR forward in attracting and retaining members and improve what our organization can do. To this end he proposed that we have at least biannual teleconferences. The cost of this was raised by Sharon. Sharon to review financial implications. All agreed to have at least 2 teleconferences a year.

The following agenda items were discussed:

1. Tasks for the board members: need to assign so people feel responsible for tasks.

- a. Conference organization – Kazuo was commended on his work to date on the Japan conference. The issue of finding new hosts was raised. Bas suggested that possibly a senior member of the board nominate to be willing to help find hosts. Sharon suggested that potential hosts should take advantage of the 'how to' documents on the website produced by previous hosts, particularly Vermont. All agreed. It was also noted that Cheryl (Springfels) was putting together a manual to assist the next host. It was agreed that a process was needed to organize how to select a host / conference venue. A call to members to invite a bid via the website or email was suggested. John made a point that we need a mechanism to make people feel they have more direct involvement with ISPGR, to break the pattern of a 'club' feeling and people feeling they are on the outer of a club. Having the conference in Brazil may help to help break the pattern of a 'club' feeling. Fay also raised that teaming up with a conference organiser may assist to recruit hosts so they do not have to take on financial responsibility. It was agreed to form a small committee to help find and support a future host. Fay was nominated as she had agreed to represent the board to interact with Kazuo about hosting. Brad and Jim volunteered. Emily volunteered as she had already drafted a document and sent it to targeted individuals in the past to attract a host. Bas was keen to be involved and indicated it is important to have a younger person on this committee – Mark or Vivian. It was also agreed that this group would also have a role in deciding what conference organizers we

might like to use. Conference organizers were then discussed as it was raised that we should consider the costs involved in using a professional conference organization. Fay questioned whether costs would be increased if they were more efficient. It was suggested that Cheryl and Sharon assist the group to decide what conference organization group to go with. A conference subcommittee was thus formed consisting of Bas, Fay, Jim, Emily and Mark.

Action point. Emily to modify her draft document to make more generic and circulate to the conference organization committee.

Action point. A conference subcommittee was formed consisting of Bas, Fay, Jim, Emily and Mark, to help find and support a future host .

- b. Finding a professional organization. Bas suggested that we should identify society management/organization groups and ask them to propose a bid to be forwarded to Cheryl. Two companies were identified: Executive Director Inc (referred to Fay's meeting attachments) and Kenes (as Bas has interacted with them with previous conferences). Fay was positive with EDI in terms of their 'mid west values', that they seem to manage similar organizations to ours and were flexible in what they could offer. Bas suggested Kenes as when organizing conferences they were willing to take the risk of a loss, and share the profits. Vivian has heard previous conference organizers may not have been happy with Kenes. Bas conceded that they hadn't been fully transparent wrt profits for gait and mental function conference. Sandy indicated this was a crucial issue. All agreed. She also asked whether they need to be US-based. People thought not. Sharon indicated we need to be clear as to what we want them to do and what not. She suggested the Vermont conference could be a guide. Vivian agreed to explore other options for organizational groups.

Action point. Sharon to make a draft document from Vermont about what we would like a society management group to do. To circulate to board. Strive to submit to ask for bids within next 2 weeks.

Action point. Vivian to explore what other companies may be alternate management groups to ask to propose a bid.

- c. Awards were discussed and it was indicated that we have an Aftab Patla Student award, and John had proposed a young investigator award.
 - Aftab Patla Student award – Brad had agreed to manage this. This is sponsored by NDI and Jim confirmed that they had agreed (requested) to sponsor this award long term (for next 5 conferences) and had first rights to renew this. Sharon raised that there was an issue in how to transfer money to the society for this award. This process will need to be checked in advance of the next meeting. Brad asked Emily about the poster awards and she indicated that this

tended to be ad-hoc and decided at each meeting.

Action point: Brad to review processes for student / poster awards, and draft a proposal.

- Young investigator award. John proposed that we have an award for young up and coming investigators to assist with promotion, similar to ISB. He suggested an award of \$5,000 and trip to the next conference. It was suggested that we source a donor similar to NDI. Bas questioned whether a financial award was needed - perhaps a highlighted talk or keynote address with a plaque might be better for CV. John willing to take leadership on this. There was discussion on whether this should be post-doc only or target assistant professors or others. It was agreed that it should try to identify people who are likely to show leadership in the field. After discussion it was thought it should be for those with a research track in the field who are showing a beginning level of independence. John suggested that they be within 5yrs from PhD as this is when in the US they can include such an award in their material for tenure. Jim suggested that senior members could fund the award. Other sponsors such as Neurocom and Delsys were suggested. It was agreed that the call for nominations for this award should go out in advance with the advertisement for the meeting. As such this should be out in 6mths time.

Action point: A committee was formed to produce guidelines and review nominations: John, Brad, Vivian. A proposal to be formed and circulated to the board to allow the details to be announced in 6mths.

d. The next 3 dot points were not discussed

- **U** pdate and review requirements for new board members – Bas indicated that seems to have been done in our discussions.
- Need to be audited and incorporated (do it in Delaware because of their laws). From the new incorporation – Bas suggested this will be covered in finding a society management group.
- Directors and Officers Insurance so no debts of the society can be claimed against the officers! It costs between \$1,200 - \$15,000 per year. From the new incorporation. – Bas suggested this will be covered in finding a society management group.

e. Keeping past presidents on the board as members or advisors. Bas suggested that we keep 'old' presidents on the board to act as advisors but possibly not have voting rights – is mindful that whilst they will have a valuable contribution and experience, having them may limit the ability of young people to feel like they can take charge. All agreed. Nil against. Marjorie queried what they should be called – advisors, ex-officio – CV implications. Any suggestions to board.

Action points: Jim /Fay to check what needs to be done to change the by-laws to reflect this agreement by the board. Need to agree on a term.

2. Financial situation

The first discussion point was how to deal with funding future conferences. Sharon indicated that not all money that we invested (US\$15,000) is coming back from Bologna (US\$3,000 return). She pointed out that it was not clear to conference organizers they should aim to retain the start up funds and that in the last conference, the WFC and drop in Euro had a marked impact on budget. Should we consider the start-up money as a pre-investment? It was agreed that in principal, it should be used to get started, but not form part of the budget. Should this be a rule or target? It was raised that this may make people more hesitant to take on hosting if they know they have to hand back the pre-investment. This is where we need conference organizers with a deal that they take a risk for a loss and the profit is shared. Need to make these decisions before registration. It was also raised that it will be ideal from a financial and organizational perspective if we can maintain stable relationships with sponsors, such as that with NDI where they commit to 5 meetings. Is this the role of the management agency to set the terms. Bas suggested we have an exhibitor committee to develop relationships with exhibitors. Committee members: Bas and Jim expressed interest, Marjorie nominated Kazuo as an Asian representative.

Action points: Sharon and Lorenzo to send lists of potential sponsors to the exhibitor committee. Task for this committee is to draft a list of potential sponsors for upcoming conferences.

- Taxes

Sharon reported that the 2008 taxes were done, the 2007 were submitted and she is doing the 2009 taxes now. That would give us 3yrs of taxes lodged and we need an additional 2 more of 'clean books' to be able to apply for non-profit status. She noted that it is important to keep the membership stream of funds separate from the conference stream. Sharon indicated that having membership was advantageous as it provided an early revenue stream for the conference. All agreed that we continue this. Similarly abstract fees – from a financial perspective it would be good to continue these for an early income stream. Oxford were good to work with, we get approx \$12 for us and Oxford - not a huge profit, but she would recommend we do again. All agreed. Another issue is who collects registration fees. It was collected in the USA for Italian conference – if we let Japan collect there will be only one change in currency, but it makes paperwork for treasurer harder. Not sure what are the plans for Japan yet. Sharon's preference is to keep in US for accounting to make paperwork trail easier. In the future it may also depend on the management organization / conference organizer. Sharon also raised the point that she agreed to be treasurer until June 2011 so she can see the society through to non-profit status. By-laws checked – treasurer appointment an internal board decision appointed by the president. Secretary and treasurer can serve a non-specified term. Mark or Vivien suggested. Mark agreed to step into a forthcoming treasurer role to learn the ropes and

shadow Sharon. All in favour. Mark reassured that we would expect the tasks within the role of treasurer will diminish with having a management organization.

Action points. Mark was nominated as treasure-elect, and he should be included in all future emails about treasurer issues from Sharon.

Dues. Currently our dues are a modest \$50 for full members and \$35 for students. Bas and Fay suggested that we increase this to \$100. After discussion regarding amount and frequency of payment, it was agreed that we increase registration for full members to \$100 and \$50 for student members, and that this be charged once every 2yrs as it is – ie you must be a member to be able to submit an abstract, otherwise there lacks incentive to be a member on the alternate years. Also plan to increase this over time. Currently, ISPGR has \$22,000 in the bank in the USA. Tradition that the host gets \$10,000 USA pre-investment money to get started. Katsuo hasn't asked for funds yet. Will await any request.

Action points. Not raised in meeting but Kazuo needs to be informed of this decision about membership fees. Could Fay do this?

3. Conferences

- Merge with Gait and Mental Function Congress

Bas raised the issue of whether ISPGR would consider a proposal to have the Gait and Mental Function Congress (GMFC) merge with ISPGR. He is on the international organising committee of the GMFC and they would like to liaise with ISPGR – as they are very interested in joining in some way. GMFC attracts 400-500 people, on the whole has a more clinical bent, thus attracting some different delegates to ISPGR, and has an emphasis on the cognitive influences on gait and balance at an annual conference every February. Bas suggested that we could merge and have a larger, more mixed group with annual conferences – to have an emphasis on cognitive one year and motor the next, and strive for a fixed time point for both conferences (eg Feb/Mar). He invited opinions from the board. John thought that alternating emphasis every second yr would be too confusing to people. Most agreed. Would the society function as a single entity? Concerned that it would sway to a much more clinical conference / society. Fay agreed that the mix of basic science and clinical was a strength of ISPGR – don't want to lose the basic science. Some were not comfortable with a conference every year – there are already so many conferences on. There were suggestions to add on a day to the ISPGR with a gait and mental function emphasis and Brad questioned if it could be a satellite session. A negative of this may be that the current satellite sessions are very small (~30) so would not accommodate the GMFC numbers and if kept separate, it would not allow the mix of people across conferences as thought would be a positive. It was queried whether a large proportion of GMFC delegates were already ISPGR members. Fay indicated that the type of people we may be missing out on are neurologists, rehab specialists, psychiatrists, geriatricians. It was raised that they are likely to attract different sponsors who may be able to commit more funds. It was agreed that we would like future meetings to have a mix of basic science and clinic. Timing was raised – many of the board preferred June. Concerned if in Feb-mar may lose ISPGR members. The cost of GMFC was raised – was held in

expensive places – felt this was due to being run by Kenes. Concerns were raised that if we had one large biennial conference we may lose the intimate atmosphere of ISPGR. The board agreed that this was a major positive of our society that we did not want to lose.

Bas summarised that the board thought we did not want to lose our identity, not have an annual conference, but rather have one large biennial conference (break even point seems to be ~500 delegates) with a more readily identifiable clinical part, be it mental function, under the leadership of ISPGR. Possible advantages of a merge were that it would bring in more money (by more members, more and different sponsors), we would have more power and significance as a society (could do more for members), and would allow for cross fertilization of basic science with clinicians, but we would need to consider how we could do this and keep the intimacy we have.

Bas indicated that this is something that GMFC would like the ISPGR to make a decision about very soon. The next GMFC is in one month (Feb 26-28th), and at this conference they would like to announce either there will be no next conference or advertise ISPGR.

Action point: Bas to draft a proposal together that outlines how GMFC might merge with ISPGR, the pros and cons and distribute to board. Board to consider and vote before the next GMFC in one month – so should be done very soon.

Lorenzo arrived at the meeting. Bas thanked Lorenzo for organising the Bologna committee. Lorenzo directed the board to review the documents he sent via email which contained the summary points, essential figures such as the number of people attended, breakdown by participant types etc, and reports on responses by participants and exhibitors. In summary, Lorenzo felt the conference was a positive one with as always, room for improvement. He is happy to take questions. Agreed for Lorenzo to handover information to Japan.

Action point. Board to review documents sent by Lorenzo and contact him if we have questions. Lorenzo to hand over information about conference organisation to Japan.

Bas then rounded up the meeting and thanked all for their input for this fruitful first meeting. It was agreed that as there were still many things to discuss, that we should have another teleconference within the next 3 months. Considering the action points there will be follow up emails within the next few weeks. Sandy and Bas to review minutes and distribute.

The meeting was closed at 22.00hrs.