

## From Aberdeen to Africa!

Hi, my name is Sandie Mathers and I am a research practitioner in Radiography, working within the Health Services Research Group, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland, United Kingdom. You may well be saying why is she writing a report on our National Congress held in Durban? Well I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to attend and participate in your conference hence my being asked to give a visitor's overview.

As a first time visitor to South Africa I was unsure what to expect. The golden beaches and balmy temperatures were a far cry from the grey and cold spring I had left behind in Scotland, but I was also unprepared for the really warm welcome I received from the organisers and delegates attending the Conference. It was not long before I felt right at home. I was staggered by the high numbers of delegates who attended, estimated at approximately 700 per day. These delegates were not just from South Africa, but also from the neighbouring countries of Africa. A number of delegates travelled from more distant African countries, one other delegate from the UK, and one from Australia. The guest speaker was Mr Tyrone Goh, the current president of the ISRRT, who had travelled from Singapore. He delivered a very interesting presentation on his experiences of working and living through the SARS epidemic, and described the lessons learnt by health professionals whilst fighting this new and unknown disease.

The first day was a forum for educators and an opportunity to discuss matters of common interest which included a lively debate on the future content and format of radiography courses. Even more fundamental was a discussion on what we should be called in the future - radiographers, technologists, imaging professionals? We have also had this debate in the UK and will watch your decision with interest! My contribution to the day was a presentation describing the role development of radiographers taking place in UK, where radiographers are increasingly carrying out tasks that were previously undertaken by radiologists. This includes performing barium enemas, carrying out venepuncture, and skeletal reporting. A lively discussion followed with many delegates eager to find out details of post-graduate courses to allow practitioners to carry out these tasks.

The Congress programme was varied and diverse including professional issues such as Code of Conduct, and medical ethics, introduction and implementation of new technologies such as PACS and PET, plenary sessions on nuclear medicine, ultrasound, mammography, radiotherapy and current research. In fact there was so much going on it was very difficult to decide which to attend and which to miss. My lasting impression is of quality presentations both in content and delivery.

Of particular interest to me as a visitor to your country were the presentations on practice which, though common in your country are rare in my own, in particular sessions on forensic radiography and the imaging of AIDS. I think we all have lessons to learn from your experience in these areas.

Many imaging and imaging related companies chose to exhibit at the technical exhibition. All the stands were busy with radiographers eager to see and sometimes try out the latest technologies. Also a number of posters were displayed, mine amongst them, and I was constantly surrounded by radiographers asking questions about our research projects in order to earn these illusive CPD points!!!!

Of course it wasn't all hard work. The social events were kicked off with a beach party held in a marquee on the North Beach, Durban - plenty food, drink and dancing to keep even the most experienced of party animals happy. The following evening the Conference dinner set a more sedate rhythm but even that was peppered by a showcase of African singing, fire-dancing, and comedy. Quite a memorable evening.

My lasting impressions? Your country is going through massive changes and this is reflected in your profession. Radiography in South Africa is a profession moving forward, eager to learn from others, and implement change. This can never happen painlessly, and the conference was an opportunity to discuss 'hot topics' with such large numbers attending. Your enthusiasm was infectious, and your desire to learn crystal clear. This was matched by your friendly welcome and hospitality. I must say I really enjoyed attending your conference and have taken away not only marvellous memories of my time in South Africa but the hope that I have made friends that will endure time and distance.

Since returning to the United Kingdom I have learned that your Society will be hosting the 2008 ISRRT World Congress in Durban. Well done all of you, you were a worthy winner. I am sure organising such an event must be awesome, but you will be able to participate in a one-off learning experience. The ISRRT conference will bring delegates to your shores from all over the world, and from past experience the business part will be excellent but all these radiographers will also want to party. You have proved you can do it once - now you have to improve on that!!

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Society of Radiographers of South Africa who made it possible for me to attend the Congress, and in particular Leonie Munro and Fozy Peer for their support. I am already looking forward to meeting you all again in 2008!

## Presentations given at Congress

Mathers S, McKenzie G. *Radiographer Role extension: a paradigm shift in practice.*

Mathers S, McKenzie G, Chesson R. *Research practitioner in radiography: An innovative role.*

Mathers S, McKenzie G, Chesson R. *Does patient information enable patients to give informed consent for radiological procedures?*

These presentations and details of other radiography research projects carried out by the Health Services Research Group can be found on the following web site:

[www.rgu.ac.uk/hsrg](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/hsrg) or by contacting Sandie on [s.mathers@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:s.mathers@rgu.ac.uk)

### **PSA Bulletin, May - June 2004 Nurses and other staff rendering radiographic services**

**The following was published on page 11 of  
the *Bulletin*:**

**“The final report of the independent  
investigation has been received from the  
researcher. It confirmed labour’s position that  
nurses are being utilised to perform  
radiographic services.**

**The PSA requested that the conciliation of the  
dispute declared by labour parties must be  
reconvened, whereafter arbitration will follow  
if the dispute remains unresolved.”**