

President's News

As this is the June newsletter and close to mid-year I thought it worth noting that on the 20th we experience the southern hemisphere winter solstice and the shortest day of the year. The good news is that from then on, the days get longer and nights shorter!

The last newsletter in March seems so long ago – isolation and working from home clearly distort the perceived passage of time! The COVID-19 pandemic still has the world in its grip but here in Australia and across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand strict governmental restrictions have thankfully allowed us to largely avoid the catastrophic consequences seen elsewhere. In fact, as I write New Zealand has declared itself “COVID-free” with recovery of its last active case.

Whilst the Society has continued to function, the influence of COVID-19 is still very much being felt and will dictate what we do for the foreseeable future. With this in mind Council met in late May but being a shorter virtual meeting was not affected by travel restrictions. However, we were not immune to isolation-related videoconference gremlins, so thank goodness for the back-up of plain ‘old-fashioned’ teleconferencing!

As a Society, perhaps our biggest current issue is maintaining financial stability in the unstable economic environment. With the next annual BLOOD meeting 15 months away in September 2021 (and the ISBT Regional Congress a couple of months later) we will not see any major income other than member subscriptions until at least early 2022 and even then, surpluses cannot be guaranteed. Since member subscriptions only cover our basic operating expenditure we rely on the income from our annual scientific meetings to support our discretionary spending such as grants, awards and research funding. Whilst we have reasonable cash reserves and investments providing some security we will need to remain prudent in our financial management and judicious with our expenditure.

As mentioned in the March newsletter we are currently updating the Society's constitution and Council is reviewing the latest, and hopefully close to final draft. The intention is to seek approval of the new constitution at this year's annual general meeting.

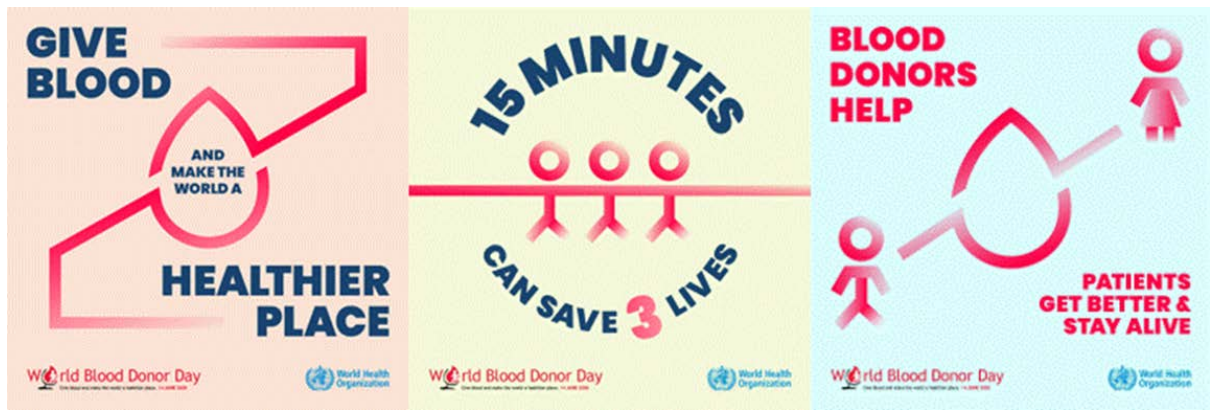
Without a BLOOD meeting until next year we are conscious of the lack of educational activities and so exploring the possibility of a regular series of webinars, possibly sponsored, to fill the void. Council is working with the Education Standing Committee (ESC) on this initiative which we hope will be welcomed by the transfusion community.

Staying with the ESC, Sandy Minck has stood down from the committee as she feels it is now time to focus on other interests and causes. Sandy is a passionate advocate for education and as Chair of the committee has been instrumental in driving the Society's educational activities including this newsletter, the website and Twitter presence. I similarly note that Gerald Bates (previous chair) and Neil Waters, have also recently retired from the committee. On behalf of Council, I would like to thank Sandy, Gerald and Neil for their hard work and commitment to the ESC and wish them well for the future. Council will now appoint a new chair and work on filling the three vacancies.

On June 14 we recognise World Blood Donor Day (WBDD). June 14 was chosen as it the birthday of Dr Karl Landsteiner who discovered ABO blood groups. Landsteiner was subsequently awarded the Nobel prize for this discovery, which leads nicely to the observation that, apparently June babies are the most likely to become Nobel prize winners!

The campaign for this year's WBDD is “**Safe blood saves lives**” with the slogan “**Give blood and make the world a healthier place**” and I urge you to visit the WBDD webpage for more information: <https://www.who.int/news-room/campaigns/world-blood-donor-day/2020>.

So, in finishing I do hope you are seeing some benefits from the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. Life is still a long way from normal but let's hope, for this part of the world at least, the corner has been turned.



Simon Benson
ANZSBT President