



MINUTES OF THE MID-WINTER MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Time: 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Sunday, 1 February 2004

Location: Port of New York Room, Renaissance Vancouver Hotel Harbourside, Vancouver, BC

Present:

Board of Directors

Chris Henshall, President (United Kingdom)
Berit Morland, Vice-President (Norway)
Laura Sampietro-Colom, Secretary (Spain)
Diane Benner, Treasurer (Canada)
Susan Bidwell, Director (New Zealand)
Andrew Dillon, Director (United Kingdom)
John Gabbay, Director (United Kingdom)
Clifford Goodman, Director (United States)
Marjukka Makela, Director (Finland)
Deborah Marshall, Director (Canada)
Wija Oortwijn, Director (Netherlands)
Jill Sanders, Director (Canada)

Secretariat

Devidas Menon (Canada)
Eva Munro (Canada)
Tania Stafinski (Canada)

Observers

Alicia Granados, Past-President of CNSHTA (Spain)
Finn Borlum Kristensen, Chair of INAHTA (Denmark)

Regrets

Jim Breivis, Chair, Annual Meeting Committee (United States)

1.0 Welcome and introductions

Chris Henshall welcomed everyone and introduced Eva Munro. He thanked the Secretariat and IHE for sponsoring the Board meeting, and the Board members who had agreed to speak at the symposium on HTA for innovators scheduled for the next day. He provided a brief overview of the timing for the meeting, proposed a re-ordering of the agenda so that item 3.0 (Governance and working arrangements) would be inserted after item 7.0 (Arrangements for elections to the Board in 2004), and asked the Board to focus on what they felt the Society should look like two years from now as the meeting progressed.

Chris Henshall indicated that, over the past couple of weeks, there had been some issues regarding his handling of communications. He asked the Board to discuss these issues in his absence. The Board agreed to do this, at which time they unanimously passed a motion reflecting their full confidence in Chris Henshall as President.

2.0 Progress reports on establishing Society operations:

Before discussing formal business related to this item, Chris asked the Board to offer their impressions of the Society, to date, and share any feedback they have received from the membership. In summary, the Board's comments were:

- The membership is likely not aware of the progress made by the Society in the last 6 months
- The Society needs to communicate its "added-value" from a corporate perspective, especially given the number of "like" societies in the world

- The “niche” that HTAi intends to fill must be clarified
- The membership is not clear on the content of the 2004 Annual Meeting Scientific Program and is, therefore, questioning whether or not the meeting is “worth” attending
- In Asia, some view membership in the Society as too expensive
- The Society needs to ensure that all information related to its activities and operations are presented to the membership in an open and transparent manner
- Use of the web site as a means of communicating relevant information to the membership on a regular basis needs to be maximized
- A communiqué should be sent from the Board to the membership explaining all of the Society’s current activities and benefits (including the Journal and Annual Meetings), and seeking their input on the Board’s ideas and plans

Action: The Executive Committee and the Secretariat will draft an e-mail to all HTAi members updating them on the Board’s current activities and plans and seeking the input.

2.1 Incorporation/registration

Devidas Menon provided an update on the status of HTAi’s applications to become incorporated as a society in Alberta and registered as a charity in Canada. The lawyers have informed the Secretariat that the process of incorporation is complete, and that formal notification will soon be received. Devidas Menon pointed out that, following legal advice, a new article, which releases the Board from any liability for Society activities, was added to the By-Laws. The Secretariat was asked to make the wording in this article gender-neutral. It was agreed that the revised By-Laws would need to be submitted for approval to the Annual Meeting in June with an explanation of changes from the version approved at the last Annual Meeting. In addition, it was agreed that the Secretariat will look into options for obtaining Directors’ liability insurance.

Action: The Secretariat will revise the By-Laws as indicated above and seek Directors’ liability insurance.

2.2 Contract with IHE

Diane Benner reported that a few points require clarification before the contract can be signed. These include sub-contracting for services by the Secretariat, revisions to the Financial Protocol, and the setting of performance measures necessary in the process of reviewing the Secretariat. It was agreed that the Executive Committee will handle finalizing the terms of the contract with IHE.

Action: The Executive Committee will work with Devidas Menon to finalize the contract.

2.3 Secretariat staffing and operations

The Secretariat provided the Board with a list of its activities over the past 6 months. It was noted that not all Board members were aware of the scope or volume of the Secretariat’s work. There was an in-camera discussion of the expectations the Society would have of the Secretariat as it moved into a more established phase of operations. While the Board agreed that it would be desirable to have someone who could manage high-level activities such as strategic planning and fundraising, the uncertainty of revenue in the next few years may make regular employment of such a person impossible. Alternative options were discussed. It was agreed that the Executive Committee will work with Devidas Menon to develop the best possible staffing structure given the current resources. Following the in camera session, Chris Henshall thanked the staff of the Secretariat on behalf of the Board for their professionalism and commitment well beyond the call of duty, and for a job well done. He emphasized that the Board has full trust in the current Secretariat.

Action: The Executive Committee and Devidas Menon will develop an appropriate Secretariat staffing structure.

2.4 Website

Chris Henshall asked for input regarding further development of the Society’s website that could, in turn, be discussed by the MCFCRC. The following is a summary of comments/suggestions:

- The web site could serve as a portal to different programs (similar to that already under discussion by the SPIG-IR group). Finn Borlum Kristensen reported that INAHTA would welcome such a development.
- An e-mail could be sent to all members notifying them each time new relevant information is added to the web site
- The web site could be used to post “newsworthy” HTA-related items (e.g., recent “attacks” on HTA in a medical journal)
- A voluntary group of members dedicated to developing content for the website could be assembled

- An electronic version of the Society's journal should be made accessible through the web site
- A "notice board" or a "chatroom" could be established

2.5 Contract with CUP

Devidas Menon reported that the Secretariat is still waiting for a response from CUP regarding the proposed one-year contract with the Society. The Board, recognizing that once the contract is signed, it will be valid for less than one year, agreed to extend it by one year (for a total of two years). The growing interest in obtaining an electronic version of current and back-issues of the journal was also discussed, along with the possibility of providing organizational members with access to all electronic versions of CUP publications. It was agreed that John Gabbay, as Chair of the Scientific and Professional Programmes Committee, would explore such possibilities with CUP.

Action: John Gabbay will contact CUP to discuss points raised regarding the Journal.

4.0 Progress report on membership recruitment

The Secretariat distributed a list of organizational members to date and a table presenting the number of individuals holding memberships (either as individuals or as part of an organizational membership) by country. Currently, there are 12 not-for-profit organizational members, 1 for-profit organizational member, and 242 individual (new, current, and students) members representing 27 different countries. The Board discussed possible strategies for encouraging existing members to renew their memberships and new individuals to join the Society. It was decided that the Secretariat would distribute copies of the current membership list to all Board members, who could then take appropriate action to promote individual and organizational membership within their countries and professional circles. It was also suggested that CUP be asked to place a letter in the journal as one way of raising awareness among libraries of the availability of organizational memberships. Lastly, the Secretariat was asked to re-send letters of invitation from Chris Henshall to INAHTA members. The MCFCRC agreed to consider all of these options in the development of their workplan for the next few months.

Action: The MCFCRC will work up a coherent approach to promoting membership and the Secretariat will send letters of invitation to join HTAi to INAHTA members.

5.0 Financial status

Devidas Menon distributed financial projections for the next two years to the Board, as a supplement to the material contained in the Board package, and outlined the assumptions behind each estimate. Anticipated sources of revenue include membership fees (organizational and individual) and Annual Meetings.

Potential donations from benefactors were excluded. The Board noted that IHE has absorbed many of the Secretariat costs to date, as well donated \$100,000.00 Cdn from the Canmore conference profits to HTAi. On behalf of all members of the Society, the Board formally recorded its thanks to IHE for its generosity, without which HTAi could not have reached the position it had. In light of this, the Board, recognized the need to remain realistic regarding future expenditures. It was agreed that a workplan for the Secretariat is required in order to better facilitate the projection of expenditures and revenues in coming years. The Executive Committee will work with the Secretariat to develop one. The Board will be notified of any major changes in financial projections or budgets.

Action: The Executive Committee, along with the Secretariat, will develop a Secretariat workplan.

6.0 Progress report on Annual Meetings

2004

Concerns over the rate of progress made towards finalizing the Scientific Program for the 2004 Annual Meeting were expressed. Members of the International Scientific Programme Committee indicated that they would have found it helpful to have more information at critical points in the development of the programme. Finn Borlum Kristensen provided a brief update on INAHTA's role in the Annual Meeting, stating that they are organizing two pre-conference workshops. He also pointed out that the LOC will be charging a fee all pre-conference workshops. Chris Henshall briefly outlined existing issues in communication between the 2004 LOC and ISPC and the Secretariat, the Annual Meeting Committee (AMC), the SPPC, and HTA community, in general. Devidas Menon stated that the Annual Meeting appears to be generating interest, since 115 abstracts have been received to date and the abstract deadline is still 2 weeks away.

To help ensure the success of the Annual Meeting and offer the Society's support to the ISPC and LOC, it was proposed that 2 individuals representing the Board, ideally John Gabbay, Chair of the SPPC, and Jim Breivis, Chair of the AMC, travel to Poland to meet with the Chairs of the LOC and the ISPC. It was decided that such a meeting would need to take place as soon as possible. Devidas Menon agreed to participate in the meeting via telephone. Chris Henshall will draft a letter to the Chair of the LOC stating that, in the past, the Board has invited the LOC to attend the mid-winter Board meeting directly preceding the Annual Meeting, providing an opportunity for both parties to exchange information and offer assistance where appropriate, but since this was not possible this year, John Gabbay and colleagues would like to arrange for a face-to-face meeting with the Chairs of the LOC, the ISPC, and P'Concept in Poland at their earliest convenience.

Action: Chris Henshall will draft a letter to the LOC requesting a face-to-face meeting involving Krzysztof Landa, Egon Jonsson, John Gabbay, and representatives from P'Concept.

2005 & 2006

Planning for the 2005 and 2006 Annual Meetings was deferred to the AMC. However, it was suggested that the Annual Meeting Guidelines be revised to include clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in organizing Annual Meetings as soon as possible and before contracts were signed for either meeting or an RFP issued for 2007.

Action: The Secretariat will work with the AMC to revise the Annual Meeting Guidelines accordingly.

7.0 Arrangements for elections to the Board in 2004

Chris Henshall reminded the Board that three members are serving one-year terms. Therefore, elections will need to be held for these positions before the Annual Meeting in June. Chris Henshall asked Alicia Granados, as Past-President of the Committee for a New Society for HTA (CNSHTA), if she would chair the Elections Committee. She accepted the invitation. It was agreed that Chris Henshall and Alicia Granados will appoint other individuals to the Committee in accordance with the By-Laws. Further, the process established by the Secretariat for last year's elections will be employed again this year.

Action: Chris Henshall and Alicia Granados will assemble an Elections Committee. The Secretariat will begin election preparations following the processes used last year.

3.0 Governance and working arrangements

3.1 Board and Committee arrangements

Chris Henshall suggested that, in the future, Board members elected to begin their terms at the time of the Annual Meeting be invited to join the governing Board at the meeting typically scheduled for the Saturday before the Annual Meeting. However, they would still not take office until after the meeting. This will ensure better continuity and dispense with the need for a second meeting of the new Board near the end of the Annual Meeting. He also indicated that a document outlining formal working arrangements of the Board, as well as the roles and delegated responsibilities of the Executive Committee and the Secretariat, is needed. Chris Henshall agreed to prepare an initial draft of such a document.

Action: Chris Henshall will draft working arrangements and responsibilities for the Board and the Executive Committee.

3.2 Agreement on financial protocol and operating currency

Chris Henshall pointed out modifications to the current draft of the Financial Protocol. They included changing the operating currency of the Society to Canadian dollars (given the location of the Secretariat and fluctuations in the Canadian and US/European currency exchange rates), and changing delegated signing authorities for HTAi cheques to the Executive Committee of the Board, as opposed to the entire Board.

8.0 Workplans for Board Sub-Committees

Chris Henshall asked the chair of each sub-committee to briefly summarize the progress made by their respective committees to date.

SPPC

John Gabbay, Chair of the SPPC, reported on e-mail and teleconference communication of the SPPC members (Susan Bidwell, Deborah Marshall, Laura Sampietro-Colom, and Marjukka Makela), during which the following points were raised:

- Processes for working with future ISPCs need to be clarified

- A role for the SPPC in trying to obtain sponsorship for individuals to attend Annual Meetings could be established (in discussion with the MCFCRC)
- Fellowships (e.g., work-exchange programs) could be developed
- The Committee could compile information on graduate programs in HTA
- A journal (best paper) prize should be established
- The Committee could help to identify scientific themes that could run through Annual Meetings
- The relationship between the SPPC and other sub-committees should be defined
- Establishment of timelines for developing the proposed portal concept should be developed by June

MCFCRC

Berit Morland, Chair of the MCFCRC, described the committee's composition, which includes both Board and non-Board members (Cliff Goodman, Andrew Dillon, Susan Bidwell; Sivalal Sadasivan; Nina Rehnqvist, Odd Soriede, Gerard Engel, Damian Coburn, and Chris Henshall (Co-Chair)). It was explained that the committee was unable to meet prior to the Board meeting. However, the following points were raised during subsequent discussions:

- The Committee will develop proposals for fund-raising and obtaining sponsorship, including creating a college of sponsors
- The Society's products need to be defined
- A set of simple brochures and standard PowerPoint slides for promoting the Society to potential sponsors should be developed
- The Committee should examine its role in defining what HTA is (Note: This item was passed to the SPPC for further consideration)

FAC

Diane Benner, Chair of the FAC, reported on discussions among the FAC (Laura Sampietro-Colom). Work to be accomplished by the next Board meeting includes:

- Selection of an external auditor
- Establishment of financial planning cycles
- Preparation of documentation for the Annual Meeting

AMC

Jill Sanders, Chair-to-be of the AMC, summarized the activities of the Committee (Jim Breivis (Chair), Wija Oortwijn, Berit Morland, Devidas Menon) over the last 6 months. They included:

- Revising the initial draft of the Annual Meeting Guidelines
- Negotiating, along with the Secretariat, the terms of the contract with the 2004 LOC
- Serving as a liaison between the Board and the 2004 LOC
- Providing advice to the 2004 LOC, when requested
- Developing a Annual Meeting proposal evaluation form
- Reviewing proposals received for the 2005 and 2006 Annual Meetings

It was suggested that the Board revisit the current role of the LOC and consider a standard process for organizing and running Annual Meetings to be managed by the Society after the 2006 Annual Meeting. The AMC was asked to develop proposals for how this would work and be introduced.

The Board then broke into their committees to further discuss workplans, and, subsequently, reconvened to report back to the full Board.

SPPC

The following activities of the SPPC were proposed by its members:

- Information portal: The SPPC will work towards developing a paper for discussion at the next Board meeting, taking into account the availability of similar sources of information (e.g., the CRD and the NHS electronic library).
- Journal: The Committee will negotiate with CUP to acquire 1) an electronic version of current and back issues of the Journal as soon as possible and 2) access to other CUP publications for organizational members. It will also ask CUP to place the Society's web site address in the Journal. Lastly, the Committee will prepare a discussion paper around long term options for the Journal in time for the 2005 mid-winter meeting.

- Journal prize: John Gabbay will talk to the Journal editors about establishing a journal prize. The amount of the prize will depend upon availability of a sponsor. In addition, different categories of prizes were proposed (e.g., the best methodology, paper with the highest potential impact, etc.). The Secretariat agreed to explore possible options for sponsors.
- Developing Countries: The Committee agreed to examine ways of enhancing developing country participation in the Society's activities. They will monitor developments around the 2004 Annual Meeting and liaise with the MCFCRC before proposing approaches to accomplish this.

MCFCRC

The committee's discussion focused on defining the Society's products. They were grouped into 4 categories:

- Access: The Society makes it possible for decision-makers and other HTA-users to meet HTA producers. It was suggested that a college of sponsors from industry, "public-payers", or foundations be created. HTAi could then organize annual seminars for such sponsors.
- Information: HTAi could provide members and sponsors with relevant sources of information on "what is a good quality HTA", methodological developments, etc.
- Education: The Journal and the Annual Conference are seen as the two most important education vehicles for all groups interested in HTA. The Society could also hold courses for groups from industry or patient organizations.
- Forum: HTAi could serve as a forum for special interest groups, offer discounted memberships for members of national HTA societies, produce a web-based newsletter, as well as an annual paper newsletter, and develop an "alert to members option" and a "members only" section on the web site.

The Committee would work with the Secretariat to develop material and proposals based around these principles and the other areas identified earlier in the meeting.

AMC

The Committee agreed on the following:

- The Chair of the AMC, currently Jim Breivis, will be Jill Sanders in June 2004. Therefore, it was proposed that all dealings with Rome and Australia's LOCs be through Jill. Jim is to be thanked for his efforts and contributions in liaising, on behalf of the Board, with the organizers of the 2004 Annual Meeting.
- A request for proposals (RFP) to host the 2007 Annual Meeting will be issued after Krakow. The RFP will include requirements for detailed project plans and regular scheduled meetings between HTAi and the LOC, in addition to a clear description of the LOC's relationship with the AMC and the Secretariat.
- Regarding the evaluation of Annual Meetings, the process created in Canmore will be adopted.
- A meeting between the AMC, Secretariat, and Rome LOC will take place during the 2004 Annual Meeting

Chris Henshall thanked all the Committees for their work to date. The Board agreed that the Committees were now fully engaged in the key issues facing the Society and making good progress. Chairmen were asked to involve as many regular members of the Society as possible in the work of the Committees, particularly from those countries and professional groups not yet well represented in the general membership.

9.0 Location and date of next meeting:

The Board agreed to hold the next face to face meeting of the Board at the Holiday Inn in Krakow, Poland, on Saturday 29 May 2004. It was also agreed to arrange a date for a teleconference shortly after the meeting with the Krakow LOC and ISPC proposed at 6.0 above, in case this was needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm.