

A brief history of the APA

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The APA was founded in 1973, following informal discussions between representatives of the UK's largest children's hospitals. At that time there were virtually no specialist Associations within anaesthesia in the UK and no forum for meetings between paediatric anaesthetists from the major centres. One of the aims of the new Association was to provide such a forum. To facilitate this it was agreed that the initial membership should be restricted to anaesthetists who could contribute to the aims of the Association, either by furthering the science and practice of anaesthesia or the proper teaching thereof.

The inaugural meeting was held in Bristol on the afternoon of Friday 26th September 1973, attended by 21 people. Sir Ivan Magill was the guest of honour at the inaugural dinner. Dr Robert ("Bob") Cope was elected first President, succeeded in 1976 by Dr Gordon ("Jack") Jackson Rees. Dr Gordon Bush was the first Secretary/Treasurer.

At the Second meeting, held at Great Ormond Street on 15th March 1974, the first two of a subsequent distinguished list of honorary members were elected – Sir Ivan Magill and Dr Philip Ayre. The first 17 overseas members, a category open to paediatric anaesthetists practising outside the British Isles, were appointed by invitation in 1976. It was agreed that the total overseas membership should not exceed the home membership, and that an overseas representative would be appointed to the Committee when numbers reached 20. In 1979 the first joint overseas meeting was held at the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto – the forerunner of many such successful meetings held around the world. In 1983 Dr Jackson Rees gave the first APA lecture, a bi-annual lecture subsequently named after him. In the same year the first workshop-type symposium open to non-members was held in Nottingham, under the auspices of the late Bill Hain.

These symposia were established to meet the needs of consultant anaesthetists in general hospitals whose practice was largely adult but included some children. Concern was expressed that if these anaesthetists were allowed to become full members of the Association their numbers would alter its balance and impede its original aims. Pressure from this group continued, however, and membership was eventually opened to all with an interest in paediatrics at the turn of the century, more than 25 years after the Association's establishment. This was followed shortly after by the introduction of trainee and affiliate categories. Membership numbers, which had been around 200, then rapidly increased and are now over 1,100. Council now includes lay and trainee members as well as a non-specialist centre adviser. The peer-review scheme, introduced in the 1990s, has gone from strength to strength, and the linkman scheme introduced in 2005 is also very successful. Recently the APA has joined forces with the National Institute for Academic Anaesthesia and has just announced its second research grant. As well as the Science committee there are also Meetings, Education and Professional Standards committees, the last of which oversees guidelines, peer review, patient information and safeguarding.