

BAP Governance Panel Report 2017-2018

The Governance Panel was established in 2005 to oversee the management of the BAP and ensure members get value for money, that the Association is achieving its stated objectives and looking after the profession of psychopharmacology. Its role is not to decide whether decisions made by Council are right or wrong but rather to confirm that any decisions made are in accord with the rules of the BAP and have been made with due process.

Professor Thomas Barnes retired from the Panel in 2017 and we thank him for his wise counsel. He was replaced by Professor Philip Cowen. The other members of the Panel are Professor Richard Green (Chair) and Professor Eileen Joyce.

One of the Panel members attended each of the three Council meetings (held in July, November and March) as an observer. All relevant documentation was made freely available to the Panel.

We continue to be impressed by the way Council meetings are conducted. They are chaired by the President wisely and all councillors are given full opportunity to discuss and evaluate business matters and thereby come to agreed decisions. We also commend the hard work and dedication of the members of the Cambridge office and the way that the staff interact with Officers and Councillors. The conduct of all conform to the standards of governance required. Many matters pass through the hands of office and Council; however, we are content that all major items are presented to the membership at the AGM, thereby keeping members informed about what is happening in their Association.

Matters we do feel need some comment are now dealt with in the subsections below, together with our comments where necessary. Some of these comments probably fall outside our remit, but we trust Council and members will forgive this as they reflect our concerns for the future well-being of the BAP.

The Council

Despite some emphasis being made in our last report that Council meetings required attendance by all members, where possible, to ensure decisions were made with full representation and that councillors missing meetings should consider their position, it was disappointing that the November meeting had a significant number of missing councillors. We were therefore pleased that both the President and the Executive Officer emphasised the requirement for councillors to both attend and deal with minutes sent to them with alacrity. The attendance at the next meeting suggested this message had been heeded.

Council has produced a risk assessment as suggested and we continue to be impressed with the complete probity employed when decisions on prizes and awards are discussed. The low numbers of proposals for prize award candidates is being addressed.

Membership

The membership numbers have modestly increased this year. This is pleasing following several years of decline and may be due to the initiatives of the sub-committee which was established to look into this problem. However, the underlying problems, which include the cost of membership and competing organisations vying for members, remains. Of particular concern is the very low numbers of preclinical candidates applying for membership. This cannot be due to a lack of interest given the fact that the preclinical/clinical ratio of attendees at the summer meeting was 113/177. We do wonder whether the BAP is doing enough in other ways to attract preclinical scientists (see comment later).

Meetings and finance

To some extent these two matters are related as emphasised in council minutes. The summer meeting is the flagship showcase of the BAP and is very successful. However, it loses substantial amounts of money. Harrogate lost less money than Brighton and the London meeting is projected to have an even smaller deficit. Council has sensibly sought ways to decrease the deficit (including holding meetings at academic centres and raising the fees). Nevertheless, we suggest that other more radical approaches might be considered (see later).

Despite this drain on finances the finances of the BAP remain healthy and are not currently a matter for concern.

Education and External Affairs

Education remains a key part of the BAP remit and is something of which it can certainly be proud. Education meetings are generally fully subscribed to and involvement in external educational events such the Cheltenham Science Festival are popular. The President's initiative in Manchester of a one-day meeting on 'street drugs' attracted top level presenters and was well attended and we are delighted to note that further activities are planned.

Publications

The *Journal of Psychopharmacology* continues to increase in influence internationally and the IF has been above 4 for the last 2 years, so we congratulate everyone involved in this key BAP venture. We would make two unrelated comments on the journal. First, it is good to see the Guidelines remaining an important part of the journal. Second, the lack of preclinical papers is worrying and it would be good to see this problem addressed. We note that discussions about the next editor are now well underway. *Therapeutic Advances in Pharmacology* has suffered from an increase in fees for open access, but the BAP has no influence in such decisions that are made by the publisher.

Conclusions and suggestions for further consideration

The BAP is a thriving organisation; it is well run and with total probity due to the diligence and hard work of the Cambridge office staff and the President and Councillors. In that regard we, the members of the Governance Panel, are content.

However, we do have concerns about membership numbers, the lack of preclinical applicants for membership and the continuing financial health of the Association; these all being matters that have been raised in previous years. We therefore wonder if further thought might be given as to whether the summer meeting might be altered a little in structure as it has continued essentially unchanged for quite a few years; perhaps, for example, by reducing its duration from three days to two. Thought might also be given to running one day stand-alone meetings at other times of the year, particularly preclinical meetings in specialist areas as part of an initiative to attract more preclinical members and meet the new Royal College desire to increase preclinical knowledge of psychiatrists. These meetings could be jointly organised with other organisations such as the Biochemical, Physiological and Pharmacological Societies who are now increasingly pursuing such activities. However, we realise that the staff in the Cambridge office are fully stretched so any further activities would require at least one further member of staff and this has significant financial implications. All scientific societies have to change and evolve and we therefore advise that the Council both consider and embrace change over the next few years to ensure the BAP remains one of the world's premier psychopharmacology organisations.

Richard Green
25-06-18