International Bariatric Club – a worldwide web network of bariatric surgeons

The INTERNATIONAL BARIATRIC Club (IBC) is currently the third largest bariatric organisation after the American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBBS) and the Brazilian Society for Bariatric Surgery. In 2008, the concept of the IBC was born through the visions of Dr Tomasz Rogula, Assistant Professor of Surgery (Cleveland Clinic, Ohio, USA), Dr. Raul Rosenthal, Professor of Surgery (Cleveland Clinic, Florida, USA) and Dr. Philip Schauer, Professor of Surgery at the Cleveland Clinic, Ohio. Initially the IBC consisted of one-hour talks given by the Cleveland Clinic Bariatric Fellows, broadcast over the internet to an on-line audience. The talks were based on 1-2 recently published, high quality bariatric papers and were built within the educational curriculums of the Fellowship in Advanced Laparoscopic/Bariatric Surgery of both Cleveland Clinic campuses. These webinars initially attracted a small on-line audience but allowed for questions to be put to the speaker. I presented a webinar in 2009 during my Fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic – a review of the paper “Prevalence of Thromboprophylaxis in Patients Presenting for Bariatric Surgery” (Overy et al. Obes Surg. 2009 Sep; 19(9):1278-85). The paper had just been published and clearly was of great educational value to all attendees including on-line audience which on that occasion included surgeons from throughout the United States, Brazil and China. It was clear to me that at this embryonic stage of the IBC that it had the potential to expand into a powerful educational medium for the exchange of bariatric knowledge globally. Indeed from these early days, IBC has grown significantly in terms of membership and its range of activities. The club still remains a free, non-profit organisation open to all bariatric medicine professionals and easily accessible on-line to registered participants.

In November 2010, the IBC Facebook Page was set up with the aim of promoting free discussion with bariatric professionals throughout the world on a daily basis. Following this the membership of the IBC expanded exponentially such that as of December 20th, 2011 there are 399 members from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, North and South America. The aims of the IBC are outlined in the sidebar at the end of this article.

**Webinar Activities**

The monthly webinar in conjunction with WebEx with web conferencing based at the Cleveland Clinic, Ohio, USA usually takes place the last Wednesday of the month at 17.00 (GMT) subject to occasional variation. It provides an opportunity for all members of the IBC to listen and/or see a high quality presentation in bariatric surgery with the chance to ask questions to the speaker. These lectures are also recorded and so can be watched anytime. The club has also attracted global bariatric surgery leaders such as Professors Ariel Ortiz (Mexico), Manoel Galvao Neto (Brazil), Harvey Sugerman (USA), Michel Gagner (Canada), Philip Schauer (USA), Chih-Kun Huang (Taiwan) and Mohammad Talebpour (Iran). Table 1 (above) lists the presentations from 2011 which were not only informative but provided a great opportunity for an interactive on-line verbal discussion.

In addition, the inaugural non-virtual IBC Symposium took place at the XVI World Congress of the International Federation for the Society of Obesity & Metabolic Surgery (IFSO) in Hamburg Germany in September 2011. The event was supported by former IFSO President, Professor Rudolph Weiner. A similar event is being organised for the IFSO-European Chapter (IFSO-EC) meeting in Barcelona, Spain in April 2012 and at the next IFSO World Congress in New Delhi, India in September 2012 by the IBC organising committee.

**Future Aims**

The expansion of the IBC has been clearly facilitated by the internet. We are currently concentrating our efforts on maintaining the high standard of monthly Webinars with an increasing number of live webinars from the operating theatre. The IBC website will be ready by February 2012 and will allow any bariatric professional easy access to the latest IBC activities, video library and newsletter. We have already organised the next IBC non-virtual meeting in April 2012 at IFSO-EC in Barcelona, Spain with Professors Jacques Himpe (Belgium), Michel Gagner (Canada) and Rudolph Weiner (Germany) already confirmed speakers.

These presentations will of course be broadcast live over the internet for any registered member to access. Long-term plans are to move towards multi-centre cooperation, be organising randomised controlled clinical trials in relation to bariatric surgery. This has only been possible through the recruitment of large number of enthusiastic, dedicated bariatric professionals as well as the involvement of world experts within the IBC.

**Membership**

Membership to the International Bariatric club can be made by sending an email to Dr Tomasz Rogula, President of the IBC based at the Cleveland Clinic, Ohio, USA. (rogulat@ccf.org). A link in the article will lead you to the monthly webinar via WebEx video conferencing provided by the Cleveland Clinic will be sent to you prior to the presentation. After registering you will receive a confirmation with the details of the upcoming International Bariatric Club Videoconference. Access to the live Webinar can be made via computer (PC or Mac) with a webcam or with a smart phone (iPhone, iPad, Android, BlackBerry).

Membership to the IBC from February 2012 will be possible through the IBC website.

**Aims of the International Bariatric Club**

1. Promotion and exchange of knowledge, ideas and experiences related to the pre-operative, intra-operative and post-operative care of the bariatric patient with bariatric professionals throughout the world
2. Sharing of bariatric surgery videos relevant to management of intra-operative and post-operative complications
3. Promotion of the monthly Webinar coordinated by the Cleveland Clinic in association with WebEx
4. Promotion and Involvement in National and International Meetings related to Bariatric & Metabolic Surgery