

Reflections on 2020

As 2020 draws to a close, it is worth reflecting on this year that is about to end. I will try to avoid clichés but I can't help thinking that no one could have predicted at our Winter Meeting of the ISG in 2019 that this would be our last face to face meeting for quite a while. Since then our best laid plans for 2020 have been ripped apart but despite this we have adapted and delivered some of our strategic goals. As a reminder, our goals are the 3 E's: Engagement, Education, Europe.

Guidances

At the start of the first wave, no one was quite sure how the pandemic was going to affect our services and how we should handle it. The ISG was a partner in some of the national guidances from the HSE and RCPI. We also scoured the best of guidances from Europe, North America and UK to bring them together in our website and pushed them out to you by email. Hopefully you found them helpful. This aligned with one of our Es; ie Education.

National Clinical Program for Gastroenterology and Hepatology

2020 saw the launch of the National Clinical Program for Gastroenterology and Hepatology led by Colm O'Morain, assisted by Sheila King (program manager) with your President as chair of the Clinical Advisory Group. We saw workstreams in IBD, liver, nutrition, paediatrics, endoscopy and workforce continue to make progress despite the pandemic. This is a testament to the enthusiasm and the energy of the leads of these workstreams, namely Larry Egan, Stephen Stewart, Cara Dunne, Seamus Hussey, Jan Leyden and Aoibhlinn O'Toole. The end goals are to develop standards of care, clinical guidelines, pathways and models of care. This aligns with another one of our E's, ie Engagement.

European Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ESGE)

I mentioned that one of our E's is Europe, with the aim being to foster relationships and have an influence in the European societies. To this end, we had hoped to bring you the ESGE Days conference in Dublin in April in partnership with the ESGE but alas this had to be cancelled. This would have been a great meeting and many Irish gastroenterologists were involved. We had also worked with the British Society of Gastroenterology towards a joint symposium. Nevertheless, your President continues to be involved in the scientific committee for ESGE Days 2021. We also launched a dual membership program with the ISG and ESGE as a membership benefit with a resulting discount and many of you have taken up the offer.

Trainee committee

Trainees are the future of our specialty and some of the best ideas come from our younger colleagues. Suzanne O'Reilly, our immediate past trainee representative on the ISG Board, has led on some innovations including north-south links, among other ideas. For the first time, the trainees had a satellite virtual meeting held in conjunction with the ISG winter meeting with some great topics and speakers which I found very useful too.

ISG meetings

The summer meeting of the ISG was to have been a joint meeting with our colleagues from the Irish Association of Coloproctology (IACP). This was postponed to this winter and was a virtual meeting, the first time the ISG has ever done this and turned out to be a great success with fantastic speakers, topics and feedback. We also had the highest ISG meeting attendance ever! Future meetings may be a hybrid of face to face and virtual. Although I suspect that many of you like me, yearn for the time

we can meet our friends and colleagues in the flesh again. I can't let this go past without mentioning that such meetings align with another E, ie Education.

Webinars

We held two webinars over the summer on IBD with David Rubin and ESD with Danny Cheriyan. Both were very successful and well received. We hope to replicate this with another webinar in early 2021. Yes, you have guessed it, webinars align with E = Education. We are also working with the RCPI to help deliver their webinar educational program for general physicians. Our session is naturally on gastroenterology and will be held in February 2021. This collaboration aligns with not one but two Es: Education and Engagement.

Farewell

We learnt in November of the sad passing of Dr Michael Whelton, former President of the ISG from 1987 – 88. He was a gastroenterologist in Cork and I quote from Michael Dineen “a popular President, a gentleman and a regular attendee at ISG conferences until quite recently. Well known and highly regarded for his paintings and in particular his calendars.” We send our deepest sympathy to his family.

2021

What is the new year going to bring? Our partner society the ESGE will be having its ESGE Days from 25 – 27th of March and this will be a virtual meeting. We plan to have another ISG webinar early next year. We are all looking forward to the next ISG meeting and we are planning to have it in June 2021 when the vaccine kicks in and hopefully we can meet face to face.

Finally, I would like to thank the ISG Board for their support and especially Garrett Cullen for not only being a sounding board for ideas but his talent for improving them, Michael Dineen and Cora Gannon for their enthusiasm and energy. I would like to thank our industry partners for sticking with us. And I would like to thank you for attending and participating in our events and hope that you will continue to do so and encourage your friends too.

Merry Christmas and New Year! And take care.

Tony

Tony Tham

President, ISG

14th December 2020