



Pumphandle Lecture 2008

"Food Safety: risk based or media based controls?"

Patrick Wall

Wednesday 8th October – 5:15 pm, Royal Institute of Public Health, 28 Portland Place, London W1B 1DE

Patrick Wall was the first Chief Executive of the Irish Food Safety Authority, created in response to the BSE crisis, has served as Chairman of the European Food Safety Authority and is one of seven non-Chinese nationals on the Committee which has been advising the Beijing Authorities on the food safety controls being put in place for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. He holds qualifications in veterinary and human medicine, and is currently Associate Professor of Public Health at the School of Public Health and Population Sciences, University of Dublin.

Issues of food safety have assumed major public health importance in recent years, attracting high profile publicity and raising questions of appropriate controls in our globalised world. Dr Wall's career

has placed him at the centre of many of these policy debate.

The Lecture will be held at the Royal Institute of Public Health, 28 Portland Place. This is 15 minutes walk from the

School of Hygiene, and equidistant between Oxford Circus and Great Portland Street underground stations. A map is available on the RIPH website. The Lecture will be followed by the Society's Annual General Meeting, to be held at the John Snow Public House, to which all are invited...

The Lecture will be recorded and placed on the Society's website alongside the PowerPoint presentation.

Pumphandle Lecture 2007

Polio eradication – a reconsideration of strategy

The 16th annual Pumphandle lecture was a special affair, a timely and frank analysis of the ongoing global polio eradication initiative, the largest disease eradication programme in history. The lecturer was Donald ("DA") Henderson, well known for his having directed WHO's successful effort to eradicate smallpox and for involvement in polio control and eradication programmes for almost 50 years.

The lecture covered the history of polio, from the March of Dimes programme set up by President Roosevelt to support research, to the development, testing and introduction of Salk (IPV) and Sabin (OPV) vaccines, to arguments surrounding the importance of polio in tropical countries and the ultimate inclusion of polio vaccine in the EPI programme in 1974. Eradication was first attempted in the Americas, its success leading to the global eradication target set in 1988. The target was set originally for 2000 but has been put back at least until 2009, with global certification (of the end of all poliovirus circulation) in 2012.

The eradication initiative has greatly reduced polio worldwide, but wild virus now circulates in at least eight countries, including at least four (India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria) in which wild virus circulation has never been stopped. The countries with persistent transmission pose a variety of

problems: low vaccine coverage, poor surveillance and low vaccine efficacy. Repeatedly the lecture drew comparisons between the epidemiological and programmatic challenges posed by polio as contrasted with smallpox.

The lecture discussed the problems

facing the programme today, in particular the implications of long-term excretion of polio viruses by immunodeficient individuals, and the recognition of persistent transmission of vaccine derived polio viruses. Neither of these contingencies had been recognised, or appreciated, when the eradication programme began in 1988, but they raise serious questions as to the practical feasibility of terminating, let alone certifying, all (vaccine-derived and as well as wild) polio virus transmission. DA then turned to consider current strategic options, concluding that the effort to terminate wild virus transmission should continue as long as special international funding would allow, but that plans should be made to continue oral polio vaccine use for the foreseeable future.

The lecture concluded with a question period, and a vote of thanks given by Dr Nick Ward. This was particularly appropriate, as Dr Ward had worked with DA in the smallpox programme – and, even more apposite, had delivered the Society's first Pumphandle Lecture, entitled "Global Polio Eradication – a call for action" in 1993, when he was himself Director of WHO's Polio Eradication Programme.

It was a lecture to be long-remembered, by all who were present. The slides, and a recording of the entire 16th annual Pumphandle lecture, can be accessed on the Society's website.



The ceremonial handle is removed by PHL#16 (DA), watched by PHL#1(NW)

The Blessed Chloroform Lecture

John Snow's London

Given at the History of Anaesthesia Society meeting, York, 28 June 2008

Dr David Zuck, the doyen of historians of anaesthesia, gave a lively and stimulating account of places in London where John Snow lived, visited and worked. He found there are a number of problems and pitfalls when trying to trace addresses in the London of Snow's time, not least of which is the relative paucity of maps. As the postal service developed, so streets were renamed and, more confusingly, renumbered.

Snow lodged at 11 Bateman's Buildings between Frith and Greek Streets on the south side of Soho Square when he first came to London but when Dr Zuck went to photograph it the interior was being redeveloped. He signed up for lectures at the Hunterian School of Medicine in Great Windmill Street now site of the Lyric Theatre*, and did his clinical training at the Westminster Hospital replaced by the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre. After qualifying Snow moved to 54 Frith Street, rebuilt in the early 20th century*. He attended the old Charing Cross Hospital and was appointed a lecturer at the Aldersgate Street Medical School. The area was badly bombed during WWII and the site is now occupied by Ironmongers' Hall. The Westminster Medical Society, of which he was a very active member, met at Exeter Hall where the Strand Palace Hotel now stands. On the 28th December 1846 Snow

went to 24 Gower Street to see James Robinson use ether, 9 days after Robinson had given the first general anaesthetic in England*. He rapidly designed a much improved ether vaporizer and his anaesthetic practice developed at St George's and UCH but mainly with William Fergusson at KCH and private patients in Fergusson's house: 16 St George's Street, Hanover Square now the Mexican Embassy. Snow moved to 18 Sackville Street in 1852 nearer to his private work and a blue plaque marked it until demolition by Austin Reed for a warehouse in the 1960s.

In 1849 Snow investigated an outbreak of cholera in Albion Terrace, a south London middle class area off the Wandsworth Road. In trying to locate this, Dr Zuck discovered that it became Milton Terrace after 1850. The whole area was redeveloped after WWII and a block of flats (Bilton [sic] House) now occupies the spot. Dr Zuck discovered that twice in November 1850, Snow had used the Blessed Chloroform on two grizzly bears at the London Zoo. The bears had developed cataracts and were anaesthetised so that WW Cooper, later Queen Victoria's oculist, could remove them. This revelation and a graphic description of the operation brought the lecture to an entertaining end.

Adrian Padfield

* Blue plaque sites

Books featuring Dr John Snow

John Snow's 1855 book on cholera (*On the Mode of Communication of Cholera*, 2nd edition) ran to only 137 pages: his work has since inspired thousands of pages. The thorough biography (*Cholera, Chloroform and the Science of Medicine: a life of John Snow*, Vinten-Johansen et al, OUP 2003) is still the best reference for a comprehensive view of Snow's achievements. For entertaining versions of the 'pump story' readers can turn to books intended for general readership. *The Ghost Map* by Steven Johnson (Allen Lane 2006) covers just the 1854 cholera outbreak, focusing not so much on the map (brilliant but misleading title to this book) but the relationship between John Snow and the curate Henry Whitehead: "a story with four protagonists: a deadly bacterium, a vast city, and two gifted but very different men". Sandra Hempel's *The Medical Detective* (Granta 2006), recently published in paperback, explores the history of cholera through 19th century journals and other records, providing background and context to the London cholera epidemic. *Cartographies of Disease: Maps, Mapping and Medicine* by Tom Koch (ERI Press 2005) shows how far medical geography has come since the early maps by Snow and others in the 19th century. Finally, JSS member Alistair Lax's fascinating book *Toxin: the cunning of bacterial poisons* (OUP 2005) features a little covered aspect of the history of cholera and other toxin-producing bacteria: Snow's investigation of cholera is featured, plus a rare mention of the John Snow Society and the annual Pumphandle Lecture (other authors take note!).

New plaque to honour Dr Snow

On 16th June, the 150th anniversary of Dr John Snow's death, the Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson, unveiled a Royal Society of Chemistry Chemical Landmark plaque at the John Snow pub in Soho – this will be fixed on the outside wall of the pub.

The event was arranged jointly by WaterAid and the Royal Society of Chemistry and those attending included several descendants of the great doctor – possibly the largest group of 'John Snows' ever gathered! President of the Royal Society of Chemistry (www.rsc.org), Professor Jim Feast, explained that few such plaques are awarded – they are reserved for pioneering scientists. WaterAid's chair Jeremy Pelczer also paid tribute to Dr Snow's courage and foresight in challenging the incorrect views of the time about the transmission of cholera (www.wateraid.org) and Dr Ros Stanwell-Smith gave a short talk about Snow's work on behalf of the John Snow Society. 2008 is the WHO Year of Sanitation, emphasising the urgent need to address the 2.6 billion people – two fifths of the world's population – who still lack access to adequate sanitation – and the 1.1 billion people who have no access to safe water. The plaque event was recorded in 'Science in Parliament', the journal of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee (<http://www.scienceinparliament.org.uk>) and Brian



Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Health, unveils the new plaque

Iddon MP, who chairs the journal's editorial board, tabled an early day motion in Parliament commemorating the work of Dr Snow. Take a look at a short video of the event on www.rsc.org/AboutUs/News/PressReleases/2008/JohnSnowVideo.asp - photo also from the RSC website.

News from New Zealand

June 16th 2008 was the 150th anniversary of the death of John Snow (1813-1858). After discussions with public health colleagues including three local members of the John Snow Society (Veronique Gibbons, Ross Lawrenson and Jim Miller) it was decided that it would be appropriate to hold a memorial evening on this date to honour the memory of John Snow. As we all know he was a general practitioner, researcher, epidemiologist and anaesthetist – and so we decided to cover all aspects of his life through two presentations – one from a former general practitioner turned epidemiologist (Ross Lawrenson), followed by a talk from a local anaesthetist, medical historian and clinical researcher Dr John Moodie.

The meeting was held at Waikato Hospital, Hamilton, New Zealand. Around forty people attended the evening including a group of anaesthetists, medical history buffs and public health practitioners. We began with drinks and canapés (there was much discussion as to whether it was appropriate to supply alcohol at the meeting but I am afraid the demand for fine New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc from our usual attendees held sway). Ross then gave a presentation which included a background discussion on the public health implications of the industrialisation of Britain in the 19th century followed by an outline of John Snow's early life (leaning heavily on the book by Dr Spence Galbraith). Ross then discussed Snow's early career in London as a general practitioner and his exposure to the various cholera epidemics and how this seemed to have influenced his thinking on its transmission. A useful source for this aspect of Snow's life is "Cholera, Chloroform, and the Science of Medicine: A Life of John Snow" by Peter Vinten-Johansen et al. We think Ross' talk convinced the audience that public health is indeed the study of drains.

Ross was succeeded by John Moodie who had been aided by the Australasian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists who kindly supplied photographs of Snow's original ether dispenser – one of which is held by the College museum in Melbourne. John pointed out Snow's dedication to research, how original his thinking was as a scientist, and how meticulous he was in the design and use of his anaesthetic aids. He also paid tribute to his classification of the stages of anaesthesia and how Snow had within a matter of months put anaesthetics on a professional basis which is unconsciously followed by its practitioners today. Overall we think a stimulating evening was enjoyed by all – our thanks in particular go to Fiona Williams and Veronique Gibbons for their help in organising the event. We are already looking forward to 2013 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of John Snow!



Veronique Gibbons and Prof. Ross Lawrenson

Pump Handle Award winner 2008 from Gothenburg, Sweden

The Scandinavian chapter of the John Snow Society held its annual meeting in Oslo on 10th June 2008. It now has 123 members from across the Nordic countries. The meeting also celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Nordic chapter of the JSS, which was founded in Kristiansund, Norway in 1998.

The Pumphandle Award was awarded to Olof Bergstedt, senior environmental engineer and drinking water security expert at Gothenburg Water, the municipal organization responsible for drinking water supply and waste water handling in the second largest city in Sweden.

The jury pointed to several strong arguments for this year's laureate: Olof Bergstedt has for many years contributed greatly to the development and application of risk assessment methods and procedures, both within Gothenburg Water and as part of Nordic cooperation and research projects.

Olof Bergstedt is also a member of the Swedish VAKA group, a group of drinking water experts that acts as an advisory board to municipalities and drinking water companies in cases of emergency and failure in drinking water quality. The VAKA group has closely followed drinking water failures in the Nordic countries and in Ireland, Great Britain and USA/Canada and reported experiences and new knowledge back to the Nordic drinking water organizations.

After 10 years as initiator and general secretary of the Scandinavian chapter, Christen Raestad was replaced by Asle Aasen as General Secretary, while Christen Raestad still retains his place on the council.



Christen Raestad presents Pumphandle Award to Olof Bergstedt

These items from Scandinavia and New Zealand may encourage members elsewhere to inaugurate Chapters - we would be delighted to learn of your activities.

Guestbooks and Cabinet at the Pub

Members are reminded to sign the current guestbook on visits to the Pub. It is normally kept behind the flap in the ground floor bar.

The Society has commissioned and installed a cabinet in the first floor of the John Snow Pub. This contains exemplars of all editions of Society mugs, and contains photocopy facsimile copies of old guestbooks. Should members wish to browse these old guestbooks, they should request the key from the manager, Nick Taylor, or from whoever is behind the bar. Once again we note with sadness the disappearance of the first two guestbooks, covering the 1960s and 1970s – should anyone learn of their whereabouts, please encourage their return to the Society and Pub.

From the archives - members seen at the Pub



Al Sommer and DA Henderson on an official Hopkins-Bloomberg visit



Richard Peto and Simon Brooker- something about trials



Mike Ryan recruiting for GOARN



T Jacob John discusses IPV with Sara Ritchie and Jana Orac

John Snow Committee

According to our constitution, the society's policies are set by a steering committee, and proposals are placed before the Annual General Meeting, which takes place at the Pub, following the annual Pumphandle Lecture.

Current Committee members are:

Prof Paul Fine (Hon Pumphandle President),
 Dr Ros Stanwell Smith (Hon Pumphandle Secretary),
 Prof Sandy Cairncross,
 Dr Mary O'Mahony,
 Prof Jimmy Whitworth,
 Dr Dilys Morgan,
 Dr John Watson,
 Dr Adrian Padfield.

Members are appointed for three years, terms are staggered, and at least two current

members step down each year (SC and JWh in 2008). Members standing down may put themselves forward for re-election.

Nominations are invited for membership on the Committee. Only Society members in good standing (with an intact mug*) are eligible. A valid nomination will consist of a statement of no more than 54 words by the nominee, indicating eagerness to serve and vision for the Society. Nominations received by the Society's secretariat (johnsnowsociety@riph.org.uk) by 8 September will be eligible for vote at the AGM.

** Members are reminded that broken mugs (and hence membership standing), and lost membership cards, may be replaced at a cost of £5 and £2, respectively.*

Ties and mugs



The Society has recently taken delivery of 100 silk ties following popular demand. These are available to members for £16 (£12 if collected in person). The Society also offers silver pump motif lapel pins and mugs. Discount is available for bulk purchases.

Please contact johnsnowsociety@riph.org.uk for more details.



John Snow Hall

Members will be pleased to learn that a new large lecture theatre at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine is to be named, most appropriately, John Snow Hall. The Hall will be commissioned in early 2009, and will be the venue for the 2009 Pumphandle Lecture.

Contact Details for the John Snow Society

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