

Report 8th International Congress of Inborn Errors of Metabolism organised by the SSIEM Cambridge 13 – 17 September 2000

"Discomfort was there to be enjoyed" citation from J. Leonard and B. Fowler, 24.11.00 (Fulda)

Planning of the meeting

The idea of Oxford for the 2000 SSIEM meeting was first discussed at the June, 1994 Council meeting. At the SSIEM Council meeting of September 1995, following replies from officers of the SIMD, JSIMD and ICIEM committee, it was agreed in principle to hold a joint ICIEM Congress possibly in Oxford. By the time of the March 1997 Council meeting it became clear that Cambridge would be a more suitable venue mainly due to the lack of a suitably large lecture theatre in Oxford. At the ICIEM in Vienna, May 1997, it was formally agreed that the SSIEM would host the ICIEM in Cambridge. In May 1997 a draft contract was prepared for J. Walter by Peter Irving of Conference Contact (CC), Cambridge. The main site visit to Cambridge took place on February 19, 1998. Further organisational committee meetings took place as shown in table 1.

Scientific Organising Committee (SOC)

The SOC worked in close liaison with the SSIEM Council, giving it a strong mandate in all decision making. The composition of the SOC was decided early with clear responsibilities defined and the obvious advantage of links and duplication with the SSIEM council. Decision making within the SOC proved to be very efficient with E-mail collections of views and an understanding of which member took final responsibility for decision taking depending on the topic. Thus the number seems ideal with a designated Chairman (B. Fowler), Treasurer (J. Bonham), main person for the scientific programme (G. Brown), links to and mandate of SSIEM (J. Walter).

The Cambridge Site

It was clear that the Cambridge site was not as suitable as a fully dedicated Conference Centre (such as Birmingham NEC) but it was clearly an attractive venue with its historical academic environment and student accommodation and hotels mainly within walking distance of each other. The standard of student accommodation did vary from excellent double rooms in Queens to somewhat rudimentary facilities in St. Catherines.

Also due to the number of participants exceeding 800 we needed to house participants further away, necessitating morning and evening transport. Transport functioned well (also for the 25 minute journey to Chilford) but participants at New Hall suffered the dilemma of breakfast being only available at 8 o'clock which was clearly too late to be able to make lectures beginning at 8.30am.

Scientific Programme

The main responsibility for this was taken by the SOC, G. Brown taking a major role in decision making, and its planning was one of the major tasks of the committee. It was a lengthy process and the last step, of arrangement of the free oral communication sessions, was only completed when the final programme was printed. The main idea was to follow the ICIEM concept but to give more prominence to posters by displaying them in a good location for the whole of the meeting.

The basic theme was "Basic Science → Clinical Disease" and proposals for main lectures/workshops and speakers/chairpersons were invited from SSIEM Council and Corresponding Members, ICIEM Committee, SIMD and JSIMD officers.

An initial draft was first made in September 1998 when a few key speakers were agreed and invited. The detailed programme was mainly finished by September 1999 only leaving 2 – 3 main speakers and 4 workshop topics to be decided afterwards.

Early on it was decided that all main speakers, chairpersons and workshop experts would be paid full local costs (registration, accommodation, meals) but only main speakers would be paid travel costs. This was made clear to all our colleagues.

The workshop format required much consideration. The initial idea of a Chair, invited speaker and additional free oral communications was changed to replace the formal oral communications by short free presentations of relevant information taken from poster or oral communication presented elsewhere in the meeting. Consequently the number of places for posters had to be increased from about 300 to about 430. Ultimately some of the Workshops failed to meet our idea of focus/

consensus whereas some free oral communication sessions took on the colour of a workshop. (see comments from R. Pollitt, appendix 4)

Table 1

Date	Meeting etc.	Main Agenda
20.2.98	Council Meeting	SOC confirmed as the Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and one other member of current Council. Conference Contact confirmed for O & M. Programme outline decided
March 1998	SIMD	Presentation of concept for meeting
26.6.98	Council Meeting	Scientific programme/budget
1.9.98	Council/Corresponding Members Meeting	Programme, Speakers proposed Invitation for proposals for plenary speakers/workshop topics. (Also request for suggestions sent to the ICIEM committee, SIMD, JSIMD Council members)
Nov. 1998	JSIMD	Presentation of concept for meeting
4.12.98	Council Meeting	Scientific programme, titles for main talks/speakers/workshops
12.2.99	Council Meeting	Scientific programme
17.6.99	SOC & P. Irving, M. Heron	Total organisation esp. accommodation, abstract procedure
18.6.99	Council	Report of previous day's meeting. Finalisation of scientific programme, accommodation, registration fee
1 st announcement ready August 1999		
7.9.99	Council/Corresponding Members Meeting	Scientific programme/Workshops
11.11.99	Cambridge SOC/P. Irving	Costs recalculated
12.11.99	Council Meeting	Sponsorship/Scientific Programme, Workshops format finalised; Evening events; Accommodation; Registration fees; Abstracts & Registration form; Abstract deadline
4.2.00	Council Meeting	Abstract judges and procedure agreed. SIMD disquiet Agreed main sponsors may have a workshop outside the main programme Final 3 speakers decided.
Final Announcement/Registration ready February 2000		
24.3.00	Cambridge B. Fowler, P. Irving, J. Bonham	Main agenda was to thrash out sites for lectures, exhibition, posters. New possibilities proposed by P.I. In fact we decided on those originally envisaged on our first site visit !
9.6.00	Cambridge SOC and P Irving	Registration & Accommodation; Venues & Catering On-site Registration; Coaching; Sign-posting/Maps Sponsorship/Exhibition; Abstract Status; Posters Audio Visual; Other Meetings; Social Delegate Programme; Print/Production; Patent Groups Budget; Other Matters
12.6.00	Council Meeting	Update and problems
2.8.00	Cambridge J. Bonham M. Heron, A Suckall P. Irving, K. Le (CC)	Update on organisation. Familiarisation with the detailed administrative aspects of the organisation, registration files and office practice in case of enforced absence of members of C at a later stage. Also the exact role of A. Suckall in the organisation was decided.
25.8.00	Cambridge Final SOC /CC Meeting	Last work on local organisation, signs, slide projectors, printed programme. Visit site for dinner
1.12.00	Cambridge, post congress meeting	Detailed review of the meeting, especially accounting.

Type of presentations, format of the meeting

Although it is accepted that the ICIEM needs to accommodate as many free communications as possible with parallel sessions inevitable, some participants feel frustrated at having to miss sessions of interest. Against this we tried very hard to arrange sessions of similar topics on different days but it is an impossible task. Our programme with 18 workshops and 18 free oral communication sections was totally full and future organisers should consider reducing this number. There might then be less room for free communications but I doubt if this will reduce attendance below numbers needed for a successful meeting. In fact, this might be an advantage.

The final programme contained

Plenary sessions	4,	Speakers	23	Chairs,	8
Workshops	18 (6 in parallel x 3)	Free presentations	113	Chairs/Experts	35
Oral Comms.	18 (6 in parallel x 3)	Presentations	143	Chairs	25

The chairpersons for the free oral communication sessions were selected late, including many persons already invited in various capacities but also 7 who agreed to do this without having any of their costs covered.

Abstracts

Organisation

It was clearly a mistake to make the CC office responsible for handling the abstracts without double checking their ability to do this. We did not check the procedure through. For example we did not anticipate that abstracts could be received by e-mail and not immediately acknowledged by the reply function, then checking the format and saving the abstract in a single database.

There were too many lines of communication.

Don't take anything for granted

Abstract submission, selection and arrangement into sessions (see also report of G. Besley, appendix 1)

This was a major task in the organisation and the story is one of ultimate success, thanks to the enormous efforts of a few individuals in overcoming the difficulties due to logistic mistakes and the huge number of abstracts. (As evidence see the JIMD abstract volume). Our thanks to the Editors and P. Johnstone of Kluwer are due.

Abstract form

This was designed by Kim Bartlett together with the SOC and the journal Editor, R. Pollitt. One of us tested the Web site submission but in part due to the wrong version being mounted on the web-site problems in submission arose.

i.e. Blue lines were included and simple introduction of data without deletion of the corresponding spaces resulted in disturbed page format. Also measures were not taken to ensure correct transmission of special characters.

Problem

The final form for abstracts submission was not the version checked by the committee. Also discrepancy between the registration form and web-site version. Breakdown in communication between SOC and CC.

Lesson

Keep lines of communication to an absolute minimum.

Abstract Receipt Deadline 30.4.00

The great majority of abstracts were received towards or shortly after the deadline. 468 were sent electronically. Apart from problems of web-site submission it was amazing to see how many submitters did not follow the clear instructions regarding format and type face or font.

Abstract Review Meeting 12 / 13. 5. 00 (Manchester, attended by G. Besley, R. Pollitt, B. Fowler).

At this meeting there were 586 abstracts available to be reviewed. This meeting allowed us to
a) decide what to do about the technical problems regarding abstract administration,
b) sort all abstracts into subjects which made subsequent arrangement in the abstract book and allocation to different meeting sessions far easier.

The hard copies or printouts from E-abstracts had been forwarded by CC and these revealed a major problem in quality, necessitating firm and rapid action as described in the report of G. Besley.

Main problems

Abstracts were not acknowledged on receipt and electronically submitted ones were not downloaded and checked into a single file.

The large number of abstracts not conforming to the layout instructions created big problems. It should be considered to introduce a strict policy of simply not accepting such abstracts.

Judging of abstracts

Selection of abstracts for oral communication, poster or rejection was undertaken as decided at the February 2, 2000 SSIEM Council meeting. The external judges were Dennis. Bier (whole set), Beat Steinmann and Claude. Bachmann ½ each. Our judges G. Besley, R. Pollitt and B. Fowler (co-ordinator).

The judging of so many abstracts was a massive task especially for those of us who had to look at all of them. The judging process can be summarised in this extract from a letter sent to the external judges.

" The final decisions made by G. Besley, R. Pollitt and myself were very much coloured by the fact that this is not a usual SSIEM meeting, with greater need than usual for political considerations and to follow the old ICIEM philosophy of maximum inclusion rather than the highest scientific standard of all abstracts. Thus, selection of orals was made on the basis of an "oral" recommendation from just one of you and further selection by us to bring up the number to fill the space in the programme (140).

Also rejections recommended by two of you were accepted without question. Where just one of you recommended rejection further judgement was applied by us and after much deliberation and some differences in generosity we finally rejected 25 abstracts.

We accept that this is less than could be justified on pure scientific grounds but I feel it would be counter productive in the long term to fight this battle at the first of our truly joint ICIEMs.

Thus the great majority of presentations will be by poster (430) with considerable time in the lunch breaks for viewing. Also authors will be told to stand by the poster at specific times.

Furthermore a number of submitters will have the opportunity to present their data, additionally as very short presentations within workshops ('a la Poster talk').

I note earnestly the comments of Claude on the unreliability of incidences from screening based on small (initial) numbers. The relevant abstracts were not excluded on that ground, rather I hope the problem can be addressed in some open forum. I will discuss this with you Claude. Also I hope that in future the criteria for acceptance nicely formulated by Dennis i.e.: relevance to clinical practice/treatment; systematic observations (not n = 1) although major advances can result from single patient; exportable rather than single country value; new diseases; new fundamental studies. can be applied alongside those used by myself for Genoa last year such as: meaningful genotype-phenotype correlations vs. DNA mutations per se; widening the clinical spectrum vs. single case in a particular country; new methodologies/diagnostic approach versus single applications; treatment advances. We should try to bring these criteria more actively into play, at not only future SSIEM Symposia but also at future ICIEM's for which we now have a transparent organising committee with adequate representation of the formal IEM societies."

Despatch of abstracts to external judges, receipt of selection results and summarising of their recommendations was completed by June 5. Dialog between the local judges, particularly to carefully decide which abstract should be rejected completed by June 15.

This was sufficient information for printing of the JIMD abstract edition.

By June 19 G. Besley had proofs of the abstracts, either retrieved from CC diskettes or typeset from hard copies thanks to great efforts of P. Johnstone of Kluwer and some financial costs.

During this process there was a trickle of abstracts from CC, purportedly ones sent in time but misplaced by CC. These were still considered for acceptance most in time for inclusion in the abstract book, 6 others appearing in an addendum to the abstract book.

Summary of Abstracts

Total received	608
Rejected	25
Withdrawn	2
Total accepted and printed	581
Accepted as poster	438
Accepted as oral	143

Number of posters and orals in different categories (% oral)

Topic	Abstract numbers	No. Posters	Location	No. Orals	Total	% Orals
Screening	001-P — 038-O* 574-0	33	Guild Hall	4	37	11
Hyperphenylalaninaemias and bipterin defects	039-P — 094-P	49	Guild Hall	7	56	12.5
Other amino acid disorders	095-P — 167-P	57	Guild Hall (139)	16	73	22
Organic acid disorders	168-P — 227-P **	45	Small Exam Hall	15	60	25
Fatty acid oxidation defects	228-P — 268-P, 575P	26	Small Exam Hall	16	42	38
Mitochondrial disorders	269-P — 309-P	35	Small Exam Hall (106)	7	42	17
Carbohydrate disorders	310-P — 355-O	33	Large Exam Hall	13	46	28
Congenital disorders of glycosylation	356-P — 373-O	15	Large Exam Hall	3	18	17
Purine and Pyrimidine disorders	374-P — 388-O	12	Large Exam Hall	3	15	20
Sterol and other lipid disorders	389-P — 403-O	9	Large Exam Hall	6	15	40
Brain disorders	404-P — 427-O	15	Large Exam Hall	9	24	37
Lysosomal disorders	428-P — 480-P****	33	Large Exam Hall	19	52	37
Peroxisomal disorders	481-P — 521-P	23	Large Exam Hall	18	41	44
Metal metabolism disorders	522-P — 532-P	9	Large Exam Hall	2	11	18
DNA studies	533-P — 540-P	7	Large Exam Hall	1	8	12.5
Methods	541-P — 551-P	9	Large Exam Hall	2	11	18
Other Disorders	552-P — 564-P	12	Large Exam Hall	1	13	7
Miscellaneous	565-P — 573-P	8	Large Exam Hall	1	9	11
Abstract book addendum	576-P — 581-P	6	Large Exam Hall (191)		6	0
Total		436		143	579	25%

* Poster 025-P was withdrawn, 016-0 = mitochondrial

** 184-P was actually accepted as Oral.

*** 429-O was Plenary talk not free oral comm.

Selection of abstracts for workshops.

Those accepted abstracts which had been requested for inclusion in workshops (some for more than one) and others not requested but which we thought might be suitable for a particular workshop were sent to the 16 workshop chairmen, (15.6.00).

Additional workshop subject selected by SOC (fatty acid oxidation disorders), J. Vockley chosen as Chairman and abstracts sent for selection, 7.7.00.

The last of the 18 workshops on amino acid analysis only included invited contributions and no abstracts were distributed for this.

Selection of abstracts by workshop chairmen was completed by my deadline of 24.7.00 in all but 4 cases which were received as follows after chasing up by B. Fowler. (K. Ullrich, 28.7.00; D. Ravine, 28.7.00; G. Grabowski 28.7.00; D. Valle, 12.8.00).

One obvious problem was the large discrepancy in numbers submitted for each workshop ranging from three for Array Technology to over 30 for some of the others. Other problems of selection are referred to in feedback from R. Kelley (Appendix 4).

Lecture theatres and allocation of sessions

The main lectures were held in the Corn Exchange, an excellent facility but which needed special attention to slide projection which had to be hired from outside. The initially planned screen was too small and a larger screen plus video transmission onto a subsidiary screen above the balcony was deemed necessary after a site visit. Leaving nothing to chance we wanted to check the system for ourselves but this was only possible at a late viewing on the Sunday evening just before the Congress. In spite of our efforts difficulties due to slides slipping in and out of focus when they were not glass mounted and the intensity of light transmission was not optimal. Computer display was excellent.

Lesson: lecture facilities with inbuilt audio visual facilities are to be recommended

The other University lecture theatres were adequate (if difficult to find for some) although some effort from the SOC members was needed to ensure all equipment was in place and functioning (why not the Congress Secretariat !!). Computer projection was available for all lectures. A major problem was

the high temperature in the smallest rooms related to the old fashioned nature of the building with lack of ventilation. Also some people complained about the low level of comfort. (see citation above).

The rooms for the posters were perfectly adequate.

Due to the considerable difference in size of the various rooms (130, 130, 250, 350, 420,1300) careful thought had to be given to the allocation of sessions to rooms.

For the workshops, after the June 9 2000 committee meeting (rather late in the proceedings) a questionnaire was sent together with confirmation of registration asking for preferred workshop sessions. Allocations based on the 88 replies proved to be only partly correct.

In future ask all registrants for preferences, or better find rooms of equal sufficiently large size.

For the free *oral communications*, once the sessions had been finalised a number of experts were asked to judge the likely popularity of each of the six parallel sessions for each of the three days.

Again we did not get this completely right but it remains a difficult task and one of the known problems of parallel sessions.

Allocation of free oral communications to the individual sessions

The allocation of these into sessions fell nicely into place thanks to the classification in subject groups done on May 13. Just a few proved problematic due to the fixed number of communications per session and some overlap of themes but this was resolved by B. Fowler and G. Besley.

Allocation of sessions for the different days was based on the principle that for a particular theme, oral sessions should proceed workshops and workshops should proceed plenary sessions. Whether this is the best approach should be carefully considered.

Sponsorship & Exhibition

We approached a total of 51 potential sponsors (See appendix 2) mainly by a standard letter sent at the beginning of October, 1999 but in some cases preceded or backed up by personal contact. Follow up letters were sent on April 21, 2000.

The amount requested for the different levels of sponsorship was based on previous experience at the SSIEM and International Congresses. Thus, £2'500 was requested for a basic exhibition space (Genoa about £2100), a larger donation for a proportionally larger space or £10'000 for major sponsorship. For major support we offered first choice of exhibition space, designation as main sponsor in the programme, an advert in the programme or abstract book and free registration at the Congress. The dates of final agreement to provide sponsorship, and its exact nature, ranged from October 14, 1999 to as late as July 7, 2000, although in most of the later cases verbal agreement had been given earlier.

The ultimate 5 "major", 11 "other exhibiting" and two "other" sponsors are listed in the final Congress programme.

Exhibition space was originally planned just in the Guildhall but later expanded to include the foyer of the Corn Exchange. Verbal comments at the Congress indicated satisfaction of sponsors and interestingly one of the major sponsors (Milupa) chose the Corn Exchange foyer, the others the Guildhall for their exhibition. The only written feedback was from Biochrom who complained on a number of fronts. See letter and reply from P Irving in appendix 3.

A major problem during planning was the muddying of responsibilities between the SSIEM organising committee and CC. Our understanding was that the SOC would agree with companies the level and type of sponsorship and then hand over to CC to make the organisational arrangements. It required blunt letters of clarification of our position from B. Fowler to P. Irving on two occasions (correspondence available with the congress Chairman). Briefly we wanted to avoid damaging the long standing and hard earned good relations between us and our commercial colleagues by lack of sensitivity in negotiations with them.

A mistake we made was to underestimate the impact of a clause in the agreement with CC whereby the number of exhibitors was linked to income for CC leading to the exhibition receiving a higher profile than we wanted.

Catering, Lunches/Coffee/Tea breaks/Evening functions

It was always going to be difficult to provide catering for 1000 persons on the Cambridge site and of course we knew we would not satisfy everyone (see appendix 5, U. Caruso). Thus coffee/lunches/tea were served in 4 different places, with tickets indicating the correct place for each participant.

We in the SOC could never contemplate other than a sandwich lunch and in general this arrangement was successful. The catering was contracted out to different bodies so that there were differences in the standard of lunches provided. Also bottlenecks were predictable and indeed evident on the first day but later, in the main, resolved.

Similarly the evening functions had to be divided up apart from the Symposium Dinner. The welcoming receptions were held in 4 different sites. Welcoming remarks were given at each of them by a different member of the SOC.

A major problem was the variability in catering, particularly the provision of drinks. This ranged from "nothing unless you paid" in St. Catherines to unrestricted free provision in the Guildhall. In some instances members of the SOC had to give instructions at short notice to provide sufficient drinks without payment. This also applied for some of the evening dinners on the Friday and again some of us gave instructions to exceed the amounts of drinks agreed in the budget. (NOTE the financial report may have comments on this).

Generally the standard of food at the three evening events was acceptable apart from the toughness of the duck (apart from that served to the Chairman of the Congress) served at the dinner at Chilford although this was compensated by the more than adequate amount of wine provided.

Subsidiary committee meetings and workshops

Adjacent to the main programme the Annual General Meeting of the SSIEM and the Business Meeting of the SIMD took place in the Corn Exchange at different lunchtimes.

Committee meetings included the SSIEM Council, ERNDIM Board, SIMD Board, ERNDIM advisory board and the ICIEM committee the last together with a very fine dinner in the SCR of Queens College. There was a dietitians workshop (Babbage lecture theatre), a small workshop on non-ketotic hyperglycinaemia (arranged at the last minute) and a working group on mass spectrometry libraries for organic acids. In addition Biochrom, Perkin Elmer and Genzyme held workshops outside the main programme. Although the rooms in the colleges were adequate and attractive, the provision of projectors etc. did not always meet our agreed requirements.

It is easy to neglect the detailed planning of what are minor activities compared with the main headaches, but nevertheless this should be improved in the future.

Accompanying persons / Social Programme

The programme itself was attractive including a guided walking tour of Cambridge and the Colleges, a visit to Ely Cathedral and the Isle of Ely and a Day at the Races.

However problems were encountered due to discrepancies between information on the programme and times on ticket, e.g. on the programme "morning event" was stated but on the ticket a time in the afternoon was given. For the "Day at the Races" the facilities for lunch were unfriendly, sandwiches were lousy and it rained cats and dogs at the racecourse !.

Generally however the events were enjoyable, the guides were very good, interesting and knowledgeable.

Contingencies

We tried to cover all eventualities including a financial reserve at the disposal of the SOC to solve immediate difficulties and provision of mobile telephones for each of the SOC members. Importantly we introduced our own meetings support into the administration in case of unforeseen absences of CC staff. What we never contemplated was that the head of the Conference Secretariat would not look at Emails at some times coming up to the Congress and did not keep his mobile phone switched on during it. Finally no one could have predicted **the fuel crisis** which came very close to causing enormous problems.



Be insured

Lessons for future Organisation.

(See also the report by A. Suckall (appendix 6)

There is no doubt that if we break down the total organisation of the symposium into smaller components there are some we ourselves, with the help of our secretaries perform better than any PCO can ever do. Obviously those components that require local knowledge, especially arranging accommodation and local amenities can best be done by PCO's.

A model to consider for the future is a 3 part organisation, scientific, SSIEM administrative, local professional organiser. This will require a very clear definition of duties for each of these.

I can only say that an earlier involvement of 'our people', A. Suckall, own secretaries, M. Heron, Kluwer staff for certain tasks would have greatly improved the organisation of this Congress. The budget for organisation as here and planned for future SSIEM meetings should guarantee smooth and efficient organisation but the exact deployment of the budget should be geared to local circumstances.

One lesson to learn from our experience is to have the courage to discontinue the employment of a local organiser if and when limitations in their ability to provide the standard of service as promised become evident.

For example initial ideas for a football match and producing a short summary of all workshops at the Congress, to be distributed on the next day to all participants, were dropped when we realised our organisational resources would already be stretched. This was partly due to the large number of participants.

**Science rules
OK!**

It was always recognised that the site for the parallel sessions in Cambridge was less than ideal but, providing that it was adequately organised, it would be acceptable as part of the total ambience and philosophy of the meeting ('academia, history'). Here we failed to some degree because sign posting as planned did not materialise.

The reality of Brown and Fowler running around with signs, sellotape and felt tip markers on the Wednesday p.m. belonged to a Monty Python film not a scientific congress with 1000 participants and a budget of over £ 50'000 for organisational services.

Finally we ran out of abstract books and other delegate information and this simply should not happen.

Regarding **bank accounts** for the Symposium it is absolutely vital that the account is opened by the SSIEM / ICIEM organising committee member(s) with any PCO representative nominated as co-signee and not the other way around.

The final thought is one of great success in the scientific part of the Congress but we could have done better in the organisational details.

We acknowledge the support of all who helped to make this Congress come to fruition.

Brian Fowler, on behalf of the Scientific Organising Committee / 4.12.00

Appendix 1 Publications Report.

1. Abstracts for Cambridge Congress.

Closing date for submission of abstracts was Sunday 30th April. The submission form clearly stated that none would be accepted after this date. Submissions would be either electronic, e-mailed as an attached Rich Text Format, or direct hardcopies by mail. No faxed copies would be accepted.

As expected nearly half were submitted over the weekend of the closing date; some 2/3rds by electronic route. To allow for postal delays, abstracts were still accepted up until 5th May. On the 10th May, I received by courier 586 duplicate abstracts for assessment. One abstract had gone missing and CC were getting a replacement; four had failed to download and CC were again chasing these up. I now have 3/5 of these. We were also provided with printouts of all abstracts in numerical order and lists of those requesting oral, workshop etc.

On 12 – 13th May Rodney Pollitt, Brian Fowler and I went through all submissions. Despite clear instructions on font size, style and general layout etc, a large number were not correctly formatted. The problem was greatest for e-submissions. The abstract form was such that on entering your name, address etc. there was a tendency to move text down the page and for abstracts to then move out of the prescribed box. On printing these out, text was missing in many and in a large number the lines on the box cut through the text. Some 30 abstracts would certainly not have been suitable for camera-ready reproduction. Another problem with e-submissions was the failure to print out unusual symbols, such as Greek letters, Czech names etc. Some foreign PCs and Macs could not cope with RTF.

Following a number of telephone discussions, it was decided that GB and RJP should go to Cambridge and see if we could reformat some of these. We spent Wed. 17th there. A single PC had been used to collect all e-mails; this was because it was necessary to protect against virus contamination. All submissions had been downloaded to individual disks, but because CC staff were not familiar with the science they did not always know if text was missing. A number of authors had given one e-mail address on the form but submitted from a different address. This has made subsequent location of files difficult. GB and RJP were able to reformat a number of abstracts but this was clearly more than a day's work.

It was decided that the best way forward would be to ask CC to locate all e-submissions, check these for viruses and copy these as RTF to a limited number of disks. There might be a cost to this but I understand that CC will cover this. Kluwer will typeset all these either from the hardcopy or from the copies on disk. Again this will cost more than the camera-ready method, but the final result will look better. There are still problems in translating RTF to that used for typesetting. Again unrecognised symbols, super/subscripts cause problems. The cost could be approx £500-750. At present (09.06.00) of 468 e-abstracts, some 350 are with Kluwer, 40 are still to be downloaded 80 ready to send. A significant amount of extra work is being carried out by Phil Johnstone, at Kluwer, to get everything done in time and he hopes to have proofs ready for the editorial meeting on 16th June. A total of 599 abstracts have been submitted.

G. Besley / Council meeting 12.6.00

Appendix 2: List of Sponsors approached

Abbott Laboratories UK	Abbott Laboratories, USA	Abbott Laboratories, Germany
Applied Nutrition Corp USA	BSD Technologies International Australia	CIL Cambridge Laboratories - USA
CIL Cambridge Laboratories - UK	EG&G Wallac United Kingdom	Genzyme Corporation Medical Affairs USA
Genzyme Germany, GmbH	Genzyme Japan	Genzyme Ltd. United Kingdom
Glycozyme Inc. USA	Hewlett-Packard Ltd UK	Hitachi (amino acid analyser branch)
Hewlett Packard GmbH Germany	JEOL(Germany)GmbH Germany	JEOL(UK)Ltd. UK
MDS SCIEX Canada	Medifood Italia Italy	MSD SHARP & DOHME GMBH, Germany
Micromass UK Ltd	Milupa GmbH & Co.	Neo Gen Screening USA
Nestle Alete GmbH GERMANY	Nutricia SHS-Clinical NL	Orphan Europe UK
Orphan Europe Germany GmbH	Orphan Europe Sarl France	Perkin Elmer SciEX UK
Perkin-Elmer GmbH Germany	Perkin-Elmer Ltd.United Kingdom	Pharmacia Biotech (Biochrom) Ltd UK
Quantase UK	Ross Laboratories USA	Scientific Hospital Supplies Espana
Scientific Hospital Supplies Ltd North America	Scientific Hospital Supplies Ltd. UK	SHS Gesellschaft für klinische Ernährung Germany
Sigma-tau Pharma A.G. Switzerland	Sigma-Tau Pharmaceuticals, Inc. USA	Sigma-tau S.p.A. Italy
Shire Pharmaceuticals	The Nutra Sweet Company USA	The Nutra Sweet Company France
The Nutra Sweet Company Germany	The Perkin-Elmer Corporation United States	Ucyclyd USA
Vitaflo Limited UK	Wallac Amersham Pharmacia Biotech K.K. Japan	Wallac Oy Finland

Appendix 3: Correspondence between Mike Davies of Biochrom and P. Irving of CC

Dear Peter

As you know several aspects of the organisation of the exhibition were unsatisfactory to us as major sponsors:

- Failure to provide our inserts in the delegates' bags.
 - Our seminar room was fixed a totally inappropriate distance from the conference and I had to rearrange this at short notice.
 - The stand position did not give sufficient exposure to delegates as arrangements for refreshments intervals were on separate sites.
 - We did not get the 3 registrations you promised. Two of these I did on the Wednesday. The third one for Dr Wim Blom was not carried out at all and he paid for his own registration which I would like your organisation to reimburse.
- I believe we need to discuss these matters further and would be grateful if you could contact us to do so.

Yours sincerely

Dr M. G. Davies

Dear Mike

Thanks for your letter of 21 September. May I answer your points one by one:

- Inserts in document bags. We offered to include inserts and gave you a date by which we needed them for insertion into the bags. We never received them from you.
 - Location of Octagon Theatre. Although the theatre is not on site, it is no more than a few minute walk from the Corn Exchange and indeed is adjacent to two of the colleges we were using for accommodation. You asked for a 100 seat facility and the Octagon Theatre was all we could find for you at that rather late stage. The Rushmore Room, which you eventually used holds no more than 80 theatre style.
 - Location of stand. It appears that Biochrom are the only exhibitor who were not satisfied with the location of their display. I spoke to other exhibitors in the Small Hall who were delighted with the response they had from delegates. McGraw Hill thanked us for an excellent congress. We provided tickets for all delegates so that we could reduce the likelihood of queuing, and ensure that they took their coffee breaks and lunch in a different location each day. There were four locations, each providing catering for 250 delegates.
 - Free registration. We offered three registrations and will be happy to provide these including the reimbursement of Dr Blom. We received Dr Blom's registration directly from him and had no idea he would be one of your free registrations. If you let us have the other two names we shall arrange to reimburse them or Biochrom.
- Do get back to me or to Brian Fowler if you wish to take any of these matters further.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely

Peter Irving Congress Secretariat

Appendix 4 Feedback letters (unedited)

Dear Brian

Just a note to say how much I enjoyed the Cambridge Conference and thank you very sincerely for inviting me to chair the last session. I did enjoy it and found it a privilege. I think the meeting went very well and you should be really pleased with the outcome in spite of the organisational difficulties. I suspect that most of these were not really noticed by most of the delegates. although I know how much of a worry it is at the time.

Once again. well done Brian - I think it was a great meeting.

Kind regards.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Anne Green

Dear Dr. Fowler,

Thank you for your note from Sept 21. I am sorry that in Cambridge we could not meet personally due to my early return caused by the overlap with the Stuttgart meeting of the German Pediatric Society. I must also say that I was less than happy with my presentation which was somewhat hampered by difficulties with the slides which were not well lighted and could not be seen nor explained from the lectern. Hopefully, the manuscript will turn out better — it is sent to Dr. Besley by same mail.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely

J. Spranger

Dear Guy,

VIII International Congress of Inborn Errors of Metabolism

It was very kind of you to write and I am only sorry, Guy, that we did not exchange a single word during your visit to Cambridge at what must have been, despite the crummy conditions and bad weather, one of the more successful SSIEM meetings ever. The enormous amount of effort put in by Brian Fowler and colleagues came through and the most sincere congratulations — and genuine thanks — are due. The SSIEM is really becoming a force, perhaps the only substantial force in the field, to be reckoned with internationally. It is amazing what biochemists can achieve and I was particularly impressed at the wide spectrum of medicine including therapeutic developments that was fully represented in all aspects of the meeting.

It is always a bit irritating to be asked after the event to have to produce “copy” but I shall try to get something to you by the end of October.

With all very best personal good wishes and congratulations to all.

Yours sincerely,

Timothy M Cox

cc. Dr. Brian Fowler

Suggestions regarding workshops

Brian:

I really enjoyed the Cambridge meeting. Thanks for all your work.

May I make one suggestion? At the next meeting, the workshop heads should be asked to present their conclusions in a plenary format for 10 minutes each. Because most people have to make tough choices regarding participation in workshops, they miss out on a lot. The workshops are a powerful instrument for elaborating practical decisions since they assemble experts from all over for a concentrated discussion. At Cambridge I made a point of talking to the people responsible for several that I couldn't attend because of scheduling. In each case they were able to synthesize core recommendations that I found very valuable. It would be fantastic to condense the main points into a state-of-the-art plenary for 1-2 hours.

All the best.

Grant A Mitchell, M.D.

Dear Brian

Re: 8th International Congress of Inborn Errors of Metabolism

Thank you very much for your letter about this meeting which I thought was excellent. The only real problem is that I wanted to be in several places simultaneously!

My own view of the workshops is that these were partly successful. I think that they went better when there was an issue that could be debated rather than just handing out instructions. Thus the discussion about Diet for Life in PKU or the role of transplantation in organic acidaemias went particularly well and perhaps these could serve as a model in future.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

JAMES LEONARD

Geschäftsführender Direktor Prof. Dr. med. K. Ullrich

Lieber Brian,

nochmals Gratulation. Der Kongress war sicher ein voller wissenschaftlicher Erfolg.

Bezüglich des Ablaufes gestatte ich mir den Hinweis, daß es sinnvoll ist die Workshops in den späten Nachmittag zu verlegen damit ausreichend Zeit für intensive Diskussionen bleibt.

Einige der Workshops sind aus meiner Sicht vorbildlich gelaufen, so der von J. Leonhard und J. Walter.

Mit herzlichen Grüßen

Kurt

Translation: Once again congratulations. The Congress was undoubtedly a complete scientific success. Regarding the organisation may I suggest that it would be preferable to hold workshops at the end of the day to allow intensive discussion to continue. To my mind some of the workshops were exemplary and a model, such as those of Leonard and Walter.

Re: ICIEM Workshop

Dear Brian:

Thank you again for the opportunity to lead the workshop on cholesterol disorders at the ICIEM. Overall, I think that most attendees found the workshop useful, as I heard a number of comments to that effect. I think the extended period for discussion was, of course, the most valuable part, and it engendered a fair amount of exchange among the participants. Partly because there were only 9 abstracts submitted for the sterol session, I elected to have fewer and longer presentations than most other workshops, which I personally found more satisfying than the rapid-fire brief abstract format of the workshop that I attended. This is because the discussion in both sessions was based more on questions that the participants brought with them than on the abstract presentations, and it was sometimes difficult to follow the more compressed presentations. Also, in the workshop I attended, the moderator answered almost all of the questions from the audience and did not encourage a discussion among the participants. Perhaps the goals of the workshops could be emphasized by some printed guidelines, i.e. "dos and don'ts," for the moderators.

One weakness of the session I ran was that some of the more interesting sterol abstracts were not submitted for the workshop. This appears to be because the initial call for abstracts indicated that a submission would be considered for platform or for workshop/poster, but not for both platform presentation and workshop. Thus, the most interesting sterol abstract of the meeting, that of Ron Wever's Simvastatin Smith-Lernli-Opitz treatment protocol, was not submitted for the Workshop, although we certainly discussed it there. Thus, it would help if the abstract selection process and workshop purpose were made clearer (which I understand may not have been possible this time given that the format was new and evolving). I think it also might help to list the major topics to be addressed during the workshop in the call for abstract, although, of course, it should also be emphasized that selection and discussion would not necessarily be limited to the predetermined topics.

It was a wonderful meeting overall - much, much better than the last international congress I attended, and not just because of the great venue. Many thanks for all your efforts.

Sincerely,

Richard I. Kelley, M.D., Ph.D.

Dear Brian,

Thank you for your letter of the 21st September about the ICIEM in Cambridge. I agree it was a very successful meeting despite the limitations of the venue.

The Workshop that I organised was extremely well attended which did limit its "workshopiness". Nevertheless, there was good discussion of the final focus and this was aided very much by the fact that suitable Abstracts were available for selection.

The other Workshop I attended was that organised by Georg Hoffmann on "Strategies of Resource Utilisation". This was a much smaller affair but we still managed to cover some useful ground. However, some of the smaller free communication sessions had almost a Workshop character too, because of well focused selection of topics. Thus I think it is difficult to make a hard and fast distinction between the two modes of presentation. For a large enough meeting, with a good distribution of submitted material both can be very satisfactory. For my particular workshop the invited expert speaker gave a good talk but otherwise did not contribute very much - I think he had a bit of a struggle with the English. For others it may have been somewhat different.

I shall be preparing a summary for the Journal as Guy suggests.

Yours sincerely

R.J. (Pollitt)

Appendix 5 Email feed back

Dear Brian and Peter:

I write to congratulate both of you and your teams for the superb meeting in Cambridge. You even provided rain to remind us that our duties were to be inside listening to speakers and looking at shadows on the walls of our caves. Your arrangements for myself were most pleasant and I enjoyed every moment in Cambridge. Thank you Brian, for your post conference letter.

Thank you both for letting me present my Keynote Address with reasonable success.

Yours sincerely

Charles R. Scriver

Dear Brian, Jim, Garry and John,

It is my great pleasure to congratulate and thank you for an extremely well organized Congress! Thanks for the outstanding scientific and social events. This program combined with the special flavour of Cambridge gave us a few unforgettable days. It was a privilege to participate in this great event!

With kind regards,

Jaak

Jacques Jaeken

Dear Brian, I want to congratulate with you for the high scientific level of the meeting that you organized my best

Alberto

Alberto Burlina

Dear Brian,

Remaining to say that I have enjoyed the Cambridge congress very much. Your flee joke was great!

Best regards

Leo Spaapen

Hi Brian,

Congratulations with the Cambridge meeting. Scientifically outstanding, and the organization was also not that bad. Great job.

I would like to read the manuscript from your closing lecture, is this possible. Unfortunately my train left 11.00 hrs from Cambridge.

Regards, Cornelis

Jakobs, C

Dear Brian
Congratulations for an excellent conference.
Thank you for the invitation.
All the best
Peter
Burgard, Peter

Dear Brian:
My only regret about the Cambridge meeting was my absence from the closing lecture by you. The ICIEM bus would not get me to terminal 4 on time to check in as required. I took a train that did get me there via the subway. And even then, there was only 1/2 hr to spare by the time the huge check in line crept forward, foot by foot. They ended up taking people scheduled to fly out of order to get them on the plane.
The real purpose of this letter is to congratulate you and your committee on a brilliant meeting. Everyone with whom I talked recognized it as the best of the SSIEM and ICIEM meetings yet. Cambridge did us proud and the program committee gave us a rich and satisfying banquet. Thank you for everything.
I am glad the keynote address worked so well, and thank you for your kind comment at the Thursday night reception. The success of your meeting will warm your heart during the winter months ahead.
Warmest regards.
Charles R. Scriver

Dear colleagues, dear friends,
as I did it already with Brian I (as a participant, as a SSIEM Member and as past Corresponding Member) must congratulate for the Cambridge Meeting. I know that it was a hard work and it looks successfui. If I am allowed to move some criticism, also interpreting the general feeling of Italians, it was really difficult to share ourselves among six simultaneous workshops. We have also noticed some repetitions, which should be avoided. However I think it could be normal in such a large meeting. The last criticism concerns the lunches (Genoa was much better) and the weather, but you are not guilty for the latter. The town is very nice, and the pubs were great!
Looking forward to meet you soon
Ubaldo
ubaldo caruso

Dear Brian,
I just want to congratulate to the success of the Cambridge meeting.
Best wishes
Elisabeth Holme,

Brian,
Congratulations on organizing and running a fantastic meeting. The Congress was a gem in every way! Thanks for the opportunity to participate.
I just needed to clarify a couple of expense issues. First, prior to your asking me to chair my sessions, I had already paid my registration fee. Can this be reimbursed? Also, I am having some trouble with the Arundle House. I paid the incidental part of my bill, but they have submitted charges for the full room charges. I will try and square this with them directly, but may need something from youngress confirming that the latter should be covered by the Congress. Thanks.
Jerry
Vockley, Gerard,

Brian: Looks like things will be taken care of promptly. Thanks. I really enjoyed the meeting, it was outstanding. I can't imagine taking on the monumental task that was involved to accomplish this. Thanks so much for doing it for us. Now you can breath a little easier and enjoy Australia next time. All the best!
Phil Wood

Dear Brian,
At the end of the SSIEM meeting I just asked your attention for a patient I would describe by e-mail to you. First, however, I would like to thank you again for the wonderful meeting. I have to confess that I was a little less enthusiastic at the beginning with all the parallel sessions but at the end I got the feeling that it has been a very good meeting! Just great.
Kind regards
Best wishes
Francjan J van Spronsen

Appendix 6: Comments of Alison Suckall, SSIEM helper at the Congress

2 October 2000

Dear Brian,

John Walter asked me to send you a copy of my comments following the Cambridge Congress. You can use them at your debriefing meeting if you wish. If anything, I have understated the inadequacies of the Organisation (i.e. Conference Contact's) but can expand on points if required. I think some very valuable lessons were learned by us all.

I hope your SSIEM members and other delegates found my presence useful, I certainly felt very useful and thoroughly enjoyed helping. If ever I can be of assistance at any stage of any future conferences, please do not hesitate to contact me. It was good to see you again and a pleasure to meet your wife.

With kind regards,

Alison Suckall

VIII International Congress of Inborn Errors of Metabolism

Cambridge 13-17 September 2000

There were many problems during the week which could have been avoided had the organiser (ie Conference Contact) paid more attention to detail during the planning stage. I do not intend to record every little problem I encountered, but to draw your attention to the areas that concerned me most and to which SSIEM local organising committees may wish to pay particular attention.

Database

The omission of contact numbers and email addresses from the database was a fundamental error on the part of Conference Contact. Had this information been included at outset, it would not have been necessary for the registration forms to be handled a second time (for photocopying and transferring to me) and a third time, for me to input the missing data.

Approximately >130 photocopied registration forms were missing, Conference Contact had neither the time nor man-power to forward all the missing information I requested, which meant unless I found the details from another source, they were omitted.

Lesson for the future: If it doesn't happen already, local organising committees should be helped to think about all the information they will require from delegates and what needs to be included in the delegate list. Conference Secretariat must transfer every piece of information to the database and this should be checked upon at a very early stage. I understand that Conference Contact were instructed to input all the information yet this did not happen. I feel it is imperative that the database used by the Secretariat be compatible with that used by SSIEM organisers, which was not the case on this occasion.

In the interests of pleasing SSIEM members, you may wish to consider adding another category to the delegate list - a mobile telephone number for the purpose of delegates contacting each other during conference week. A common lament was that delegates found it hard or impossible to seek out particular individuals. This information could be requested and volunteered on the registration form

21 September 2000

Signage

Signage was inadequate and confusing. As the week progressed, largely due to the efforts of myself, Jim and Brian, signage improved. I spent much of the first day of the conference orientating delegates and physically taking them around. It was also unclear to many speakers where to go for slide checks. I realise that signage was a prime consideration of the SSIEM Organising Committee during the planning stage but the standard expected by them was not met by Conference Contact.

Lesson for the future: Organising Committee ensure the signage is more than adequate on the eve of the conference and, depending on the location, consider employing help to show people to locations.

Information

to Delegates

The amount of information released before and during the conference was minimal. The fact that Conference Contact's office answer machine stated simply there was no one available due to them being at a conference, and not leaving a forwarding number, caused frustration and problems. At the very least, delegates should be

given a viable emergency contact number for Conference week in their confirmation letter.

Emergency medical care was alluded to in the delegate handbook but no telephone number given. In practice, it was difficult for most delegates and impossible for a foreign speaking delegate to contact a GP without my assistance. Apparently Peter Irving had a contact number, but did not leave it with his staff and was himself mostly uncontactable until the last day of the conference. I found it most worrying that Peter (allegedly) advised a young lady from Portugal that she did not in fact need the services of the GP because he (GP) would not prescribe her anything for her condition and that she should instead go to the local pharmacy. The young lady concerned came to me the next day and I arranged for her to be seen by the emergency doctor who prescribed the medication she required.

Lesson for the future: a list of essential telephone numbers should be left with all of the helpers so it is readily available. A medical contact number should be available to all delegates in case it is needed day or night.

to Sponsors

It appeared that all sponsors were given minimal information, particularly relating to dismantling their stands (24h before the conference end) and storage of their equipment. There seemed to be a conflict of expectation and realisation between some sponsors and Peter Irving. This led to misunderstanding and bad feeling.

Lesson for the future: perhaps clear, unambiguous guidelines/instructions could be released (if they weren't on this occasion), in writing by the Organising Committee to limit any confusion that may arise out of private conversations between sponsors and hired organising company.

21 September 2000

CPD

The American delegates were interested in collecting CPD points but it was obvious their system was not yet as well established as in UK. SIMD had not organised CPD accreditation for its members so I suggested delegates tried to convert it. However, Leslie Lublink and I got on well and intend to keep in touch, I will warn her that she may be approached by some SIMD members seeking assistance to organise American CPD retrospectively.

Lesson for the future: may be this could be considered or discussed in planning meetings.

Siting of registration and SSIEM office

The SSIEM office (housing Malcolm Heron and on the latter two days myself) would be far more effective if it were sited in the main hub of registration and delegate thoroughfare.

Internet access was lost for most of Friday morning, this would have been avoided had the installation been supervised by the hirer (Conference Contact), although I would have been able to oversee the installation had I not been in a different building.

Lesson for the future: the SSIEM Council member undertaking a site inspection could check availability of space for office area in delegate thoroughfare.

General comment

It would appear that not all professional conference organising companies have the same sense of ownership or responsibility for caring for SSIEM members as does the Society (SSIEM) and unfortunately many delegates picked up on this. I hope that my presence went some way to alleviating situations and feel that those who came to me with problems were satisfied that I had dealt with them efficiently, kindly and timely.

Alison Suckall