

**The British Epidermo-Epidemiology Society has now been wound up - please see message below from the Chair**

**Time to wind down the British Epidermo-Epidemiology Society (BEES) and wind up the European Dermato-Epidemiology Network (EDEN)**

*Origins of BEES*

BEES <http://www.bees.org.uk/about/> was set up by myself and a number of enthusiastic British colleagues when I was a Wellcome Research Fellow at St. Johns Dermatology Centre in 1990. The aim of BEES was to stimulate and promote high scientific standards of research into the epidemiology of skin disease. Epidemiology and clinical research was a neglected area of study in dermatology at the time. In addition to traditional descriptive epidemiology, the remit of BEES also included health services research as applied to dermatology and eventually intervention studies such as clinical trials. The group represented a "half way house" between dermatologists and epidemiologists, public health physicians, social scientists and statisticians in order to encourage inter-disciplinary and collaborative research. We held annual scientific meetings to discuss methodological problems openly and to sound out preliminary results. These inter-disciplinary meetings were well attended and often including colleagues interested in epidemiology and health services research from overseas. As the years passed by, epidemiology and health services research slowly gained a respected foothold in the major scientific and clinical meetings as people realised that studying whole populations as well as cells could give insight into the causes of skin diseases<sup>1, 2</sup>. BEES always promoted population and basic scientists to work together, which I am pleased to see happening much more now. BEES eventually became a registered charity and an affiliated specialty group to the British Association of Dermatologists – a link which we have always appreciated.

*BEES get busy in Europe and the US*

Given the adequate epidemiology and clinical research content at the major meetings in the new Millennium, the need for our annual BEES meetings diminished and attendance dwindled. We then concentrated our efforts on linking up with other like-minded colleagues across Europe and the US to undertake collaborative research and scientific exchange. In Europe, Luigi Naldi (Italy), Thomas Diepgen (Germany), Jan Nico Bouwes Bavinck (Netherlands), Jean-Jacques Grob (France) and I set up the European Dermato-Epidemiology Network in a café in Marseilles in 1995.

EDEN <http://eden.dermis.net/> is now a thriving collaborative community with a strong track record in publishing collaborative research, currently led by Sinead Langan. EDEN led to the development of the American Dermato-Epidemiology Network <http://www.adenet.us/about.html> in 2006. Every three years or so, the two groups meet with other colleagues from over the world for an International Dermato-Epidemiology Association (IDEA) symposium, and idea that I set up with Marty Weinstock (US) over a coffee at the AAD meeting in Washington in 1996. BEES awarded a number of travel fellowships to help junior researchers attend such meetings.

*BEES start teaching*

The second way forward for BEES to contribute to dermatology was to promote teaching and learning. In addition to our scientific meetings, I set up the BEES course in Nottingham in 1994 called "Getting to grips with evidence-based dermatology" with the idea of covering essential aspects of study design and critical appraisal of clinical dermatological research. The course has always been full and has attracted trainees from all over the world. Any profits from the course are used to sponsor two dermatology trainees from Africa, initially from the RDTC in Tanzania and more recently from Ethiopia (Figure 2). Now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year, the course will continue to be delivered here at the Centre of Evidence-Based Dermatology in Nottingham, and we will look into expanding the number of places available as we always have to turn some away who are on the waiting list. We also plan to put on some extra summer schools on topics such as better paper writing as we did in the past with BEES.

## Job done

The need for BEES as originally set up has gone because the job is done. It is time to buzz off. Epidemiology and clinical research is now a respected discipline present at all major meetings, and groups such as EDEN are working effectively to reduce key uncertainties through collaborative research. As a past editor of the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology* put it, epidemiology is the oldest new kid on the block<sup>3</sup>. The contribution of epidemiology and clinical trials to our understanding of skin disease is summarised comprehensively elsewhere<sup>4,5</sup>.

I have many happy memories of our early beginnings in BEES with colleagues such as Rod Hay at St. Johns, and I still snigger at some of our funnier moments such as using a special black and yellow BEES glove to present JT Elder with an award at one of our meetings. I have no sadness in closing down BEES with the support of the BEES Executive and Membership because it has done what it needs to do. EDEN flourishes, the BEES course will continue and the UK Dermatology Clinical Trials Network goes from strength to strength<sup>6</sup>. The BEES are not dead, but they live in productively on in other similar organisations such as the UKDCTN and EDEN. Thank you to the BAD and all those who have supported BEES and its important contribution to developing dermato-epidemiology as a respected discipline over the last 25 years. Long may epidemiology flourish in mainstream dermatology and at the centre of the tree of dermatological research.

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For further details about the next Getting to grips with evidence-based dermatology course, please contact [margaret.whittingham@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:margaret.whittingham@nottingham.ac.uk)

## References

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