

INTERNATIONAL BALINT FEDERATION

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Minutes of the meeting of the Council of the Federation held on Sunday 22 September 2002 at Exeter College, Oxford, England.

Present:

Dr Heide Otten (president)	GERMANY	heideotten@gmx.de
Dr Marie-Anne Puel (vice-president)	FRANCE	mapuel@impact-medecin.fr
Dr John Salinsky (general secretary)	UK	JVSalinsky@aol.com
Dr Michel Delbrouck (treasurer)	BELGIUM	michel.delbrouck@ifts.be
Dr Sanja Blažeković-Milanović	CROATIA	nikola.milakovic@zg.hinet.hr
Dr Stanka Stojanović-Spehar	CROATIA	
Prof Ernst Petzold	GERMANY	epetzold@ukaachen.de
De Stefan Alder	GERMANY	
Dr Ben Maoz	ISRAEL	bmaoz@inter.net.il
Dr Andre Matalon	ISRAEL	
Dr Martin Ivanovski	MACEDONIA	
Dr Vladimir Vinokour	RUSSIA	vavin@peterlink.ru
Dr Hanspeter Kunz	SWITZERLAND	hans@hin.ch
Dr Susanne Hediger	SWITZERLAND	
Dr Erica Jones	UK	erica-joy-jones@hotmail.com
Dr Lenka Speight	UK	
Dr Heather Suckling	UK	heathers@doctors.org.uk
Dr David Watt	UK	david.watt@gp-f84093.nhs.uk
Dr Richard Addison	USA	Raddison1@aol.com
Dr Mary Hall	USA	Mhall@carolinas.org
Dr Ann Sinclair	USA	Sinclair@ohsu.edu

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Dr Michèle Lachowsky (ex-president, France), Dr Kornélia Bobay (vice-president, Hungary), Drs Michelle Moreau-Ricaud and Régine Tortes Saint-Jammes (France), Dr Margarethe Stubbe (Germany), Drs Barbara Jugowar and Maria Skommer (Poland), Dr Albert Veress (Romania), Dr Zlata Kralj (Slovenia), Prof Dr Boris Luban-Plozza (Switzerland), Dr Marja Nick (Finland) Drs Anita Häggmark and Henry Jablonski (Sweden), Dr Helena Nielsen (Denmark), Dr Ante Gilić (Croatia), Dr Jorge Brandão (Portugal), Dr Albert Veress (Romania).

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting in Stockholm, Sweden (27 April 2002) were circulated and approved.

3. NEWS FROM NEW SOCIETIES

Israel. **Prof Binyamin Maoz** said that Israel now had a Balint Society of 30 members. They are planning to hold a Balint Day for GPs and anyone else who is

interested. **Dr André Matalon** added that they are hoping that the political situation will improve so that an International meeting will be possible next year.

Switzerland. Dr Hanspeter Kunz brought greetings from Henry Egli, the president of the new Swiss Balint. He and his committee members were all at the annual Balint meeting in Siltzari (Switzerland) and sent their apologies. There have been Balint groups in Switzerland for many years but two years ago a new Balint Society was founded and this now has 80 members.

USA. The American Balint Society has been going since 1990 but has not been represented at an International Federation Council meeting for several years. Their president (**Dr Mary Hall**) told us that they have a very active program of intensive training weekends for leaders of groups of family practice residents. They are about to start holding weekends for all family doctors, not just leaders, on the model of the UK Oxford weekends. The first of these will be in Charleston, South Carolina in the Spring of 2003. The ABS has a membership of 120 but altogether, in the last ten years, thousands of doctors have taken part in Balint groups to some extent.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

The treasurer (**Dr Michel Delbrouck, Belgium**) reported that the Federation had a healthy bank balance of € 18 000, an increase of 100% in 4 years. This was the result of more Societies paying their annual fees and the offer of the officers to limit their expenses. The question now was what to do with the money? He suggested the creation of a website and the provision of subsidies to enable East European members to attend international meetings. After some discussion it was agreed that we should have a new IBF website with an introductory home page and links to all the National Balint websites, including that for the Berlin Congress (www.internationalbalintcongress.de) The president (**Dr Heide Otten, Germany**) volunteered her son for the post of webmaster. She asked for further suggestions about spending the surplus at our next meeting. The treasurer was congratulated on his excellent work.

5. INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS IN BERLIN 2003

The president gave us an update on plans for the Congress. There will be three lectures on the Thursday, each allotted 40 minutes. The invited speakers are Dr G Bergmann (Austria) Prof Ben Maoz (Israel) and Dr Michelle Moreau-Ricaud (France). Anyone wishing to present a short paper on Friday or Saturday should send in their abstract as soon as possible and by the end of December at the latest. The Friday session will be devoted to research papers and the Saturday one to more general themes. There will also be a session on Saturday on 'Reports from round the world'. **Dr Ritch Addison (USA)** advised that reports on research in progress should be brief as 'research is best boiled down'. He also suggested that it would be a good idea to group papers on the same or similar subjects (e.g. 'burnout') should be presented together to facilitate and focus discussion. **Prof Ernst Petzold (Germany)** reminded everyone that the full text of all lectures should be received by the Congress Committee by February 2003 so that they could be issued as a booklet for all delegates when they arrived. Dr André Matalon (Israel) asked about posters, preferably with time for discussion. Ernst said that this would be considered. There was some discussion about translation but Ernst reminded everyone that the decision to have English only for the main sessions had already been taken because of the expense of employing interpreters. However the small groups will be in other languages according to demand. There will also be some leader training groups in German, English and possibly French. The cultural program (including opera) will be

available at the end of the year. Heide and Ernst reminded us that all the information about the Congress including registration forms and hotel accommodation details will continue to be available on the internet (www.internationalbalintcongress.de)

6. 14th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS 1995

There was a discussion about where the 14th Congress should be held. **Dr Heather Suckling (UK)** proposed asking the Northern Irish members to get together with their colleagues in the Republic and organise an all-Ireland Balint Congress to be held in Dublin or perhaps in Cork. She undertook to discuss this with Dr Ephrem Bogues and his colleagues. The offer by Dr Ante Gilić (at our last meeting) to host the Congress in Zadar (Croatia) was regrettably turned down because the journey would involve at least two flights. Michel Delbrouck reported that the Belgian Society did not feel ready to organise an International Congress by themselves. **Dr Marie-Anne Puel (Vice-president, France)** said that the situation was the same in France; but representatives of the two countries would be meeting at the French National Congress in Avignon in October and they would be able to look at the possibility of putting on a 2005 International Congress together. Ritch Addison thought the Europeans saw the USA as being too far away and they would not be proposing to host another International Congress unless there was a big pressure to do so. He offered to move the USA a little nearer; but **Erica Jones (UK)** said that, regrettably, it was already drifting further away .

Michel Delbrouck proposed the formation of a Francophone Balint Association to include Balint psychodrama; and the Israeli delegates offered hospitality for a council meeting in Israel in the Spring of 2004. Next year in Jerusalem?

7. ASCONA PRIZES

Michel said that last year three students had sent in essays for the competition but had received no acknowledgement. Ernst Petzold said that there had been difficulties because Prof Boris Luban-Plozza had been unwell. However there were 40-50 entries and five prizes had been awarded. The names of the winners and their essays can be found on the German Society's website and will also be published in the next edition of the Balint-Journal. The Council expressed their regrets about Boris's illness and send their good wishes to him for a speedy recovery.

8. BALINT IN MACEDONIA

Dr Martin Ivanovski told us that there were two groups running in Macedonia thanks to the basic training provided by Heather Suckling. The next steps will be to form a Balint Society and to organise training for new leaders. Reform of the primary Health Care system is going on and, thanks to Heather, Balint will be included as an official component of GP training.

9. BALINT RESEARCH

The President invited delegates to report on research initiatives in their home countries.

Heather Suckling described a new project in the UK in which Balint and 'non- Balint' groups are being identified among GP training schemes in London and their differences are being studied. A research worker experienced in qualitative methods

has been appointed to carry out in depth interviews with members of a single Balint group at different stages of their experience in the group.

From the USA, Ritch Addison told us about a project in support services in Family practice and other training programs. One question is whether or not the program includes a Balint group. The American Balint Society is also doing a project on the essential and desirable characteristics of Balint groups. This grew out of a leader credentialing meeting which included a mutual rating system and qualitative evaluation of groups and leaders. Mary Hall added that the ABS research co-ordinator, Don Nease has circulated 100 members to ask them 'what is going on?' Ben Maoz said that he would like to be able to collaborate with the ABS researchers to develop an evaluation instrument.

Ernst Petzold said that in Germany they had sent a questionnaire to all their members, of who one third have replied so far. They were asked which from of Balint group they preferred, and surprisingly, most voted for the 'classic' way. 50% have mixed groups with nurses and social workers. Balint work is in the GP training curriculum and is going to be evaluated. Ernst himself is interested in the area where family medicine and family medicine meet. Finally he mentioned a psycholinguistics group in Cologne which is looking at the language of doctor and patient.

10. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next council meeting will be held during the 3rd Romanian International Balint Conference in Miercurea-Ciuc, Romania, from 1-4 May 2003. Details of the Conference are available from Dr Albert Veress, email: averess@nextro.ro The time of the council meeting and the agenda will be circulated about 8 weeks before the meeting.

LETTER FROM BUDAPEST

Although our Hungarian vice-president, Dr Nellie Bobay was unable to attend she wrote to tell us the Balint news from Hungary. The 15th National Balint Conference will be held in Budapest on 19 October 2002. Guest speakers will be Dr Zlata Kralj (Slovenia) and Dr Andor Harrach (Germany). There will also be a psychosomatic postgraduate course with Balint groups every month from January to May 2003. A new group of Balint leaders will be accredited by the Hungarian Society (with recognition from the International Federation). Some representatives from Hungary will be present at the next council meeting in Romania and, until then, Nellie sends us her best wishes and Balint love.

THE OXFORD BALINT WEEKEND

Those who attended the council meeting also took part in the weekend, which began on Friday evening with a keynote lecture given by Dr Laurel Milberg from the USA. Laurel recalled that her initial Balint training had been in a group in Pittsburg with Dr Rex Pittenger who had himself worked with Michael Balint in London. She gave an invigorating account of what Balint means to her and her fellow members of the American Balint Society. The delegates then split up in to small groups to present and reflect on doctor-patient encounters in the first of four Balint group sessions. There were two more sessions on Saturday morning and a final one on Sunday morning. On Saturday afternoon John Salinsky led a large group on a tour of the Oxford colleges and University buildings culminating in the ascent of the tower of St Mary's Church for some awesome aerial views of the ancient city. On Saturday evening there was a dinner in the College's magnificent 17th Century Hall. Paul Sackin proposed the

health of the Guests and Richard Addison (USA) replied with a toast to the host Society. Afterwards there was drinking (and some dancing) in the college bar. We were very happy to have such a large number of guests from other countries and we can look forward to a similar experience next year in Romania. I hope to see you all there!

JohnSalinsky
General Secretary