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Editorial – September 11 ...

by
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What a difference three months makes! When I wrote editorial for the August edition of Australian Military Medicine, I was thinking ahead of the tenth AMMA conference and my vision for the future for the journal. What none of us had planned for were the events of September 11 and its aftermath. September 11, 2001 will remain as a key event in the psyche of our generation. We often hear talk of people remembering where they were and what they were doing when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated or when man first stepped on the moon. Whilst I don't remember the first of these, and only have vague recollections of the second, I will always remember September 11, 2001. Like many in Australia, I was woken by a telephone call from friends and told to turn on the television. As awestruck as we might have been at seeing man step on the moon, we were more shocked and horrified to watch live terrorist attacks being carried out against a defenceless civilian population. These stark images will remain a constant reminder that we must prepare to defend our country against all forms of aggression, including terrorism. The subsequent war against terrorism has and will continue to affect us all. Indeed, as I write, some of our military members will be providing health support in this war.

On a more positive note, AMMA held a very successful 10th Annual Scientific Conference at Surfers Paradise in late October 2001. Although some of our key speakers were unable to attend because of the events in America, the conference had a great turnout with lots of excellent presentations. It is always interesting to reflect at these conferences on how far that the Association has progressed over the last decade. It was especially enjoyable to reflect whilst walking along the beach at Surfers Paradise. As can be seen from the enclosed photograph, the AMMA Council certainly enjoyed the conference.



Current Council – 10th AMMA Conference

Left to right Nader Abou-Seif (VI Pres), Dave Emonson, Fabian Purcell, Graham Boothby, Andy Robertson, Janet Scott, Beverley Wright, Paula Leishman and Joyce McGregor (Secretariat) Russ Schedlich (Pres) and Bruce Short (Patron)

Late December 2001 brought us the news that the current Director General Defence Health Service had put in his resignation and would be leaving on 08 February 2002. Brigadier Wayne Ramsey's two years as DGDHS has seen a revitalisation of the Defence Health Service, particularly at the strategic level. Brigadier Ramsey has been a strong supporter of AMMA during his career and AMMA wishes him all the best for the future.

The December issue once again brings an interesting journal with a number of different themes. These include operational medicine, aviation medicine, tropical medicine, health economics, naval medical history, medical training and defence against chemical weapons. The Patron's Address on 'Honour, chivalry and the role of medicine in the military' provides an excellent review of the activities of the Defence Health Service over the last 12 months. As always, I look forward to a host of new and interesting articles in 2002.

Andy Robertson