Update from the IFHRO Executive Committee

Lorraine Nicholson

The IFHRO Executive Committee held its annual meeting on 24-25 August 2002 in Dublin just prior to the start of the 10th European Conference on Health Records, which was held at Trinity College, Dublin, 25-29 August.

As the Executive Committee (EC) only meets once a year the meetings are inevitably busy, but we do manage to work very effectively and productively by means of e-mail in between meetings. Working with four colleagues who live in different time zones is challenging, interesting and rewarding. A wide range of issues were discussed, including those that follow.

Developing the regional concept

Since the General Assembly meeting in Melbourne in October 2000, at which time the new constitution of IFHRO was accepted, each of the EC members has had a designated responsibility for the region in which they live and work, with the exception of the President, who has an overview of all activity. The regions and their designated Directors are as follows:

- The Americas – Jean Clark, President Elect (USA)
- Western Pacific – Philip Roxborough, Secretary-Treasurer (New Zealand)
- Africa, Eastern Mediterranean & SE Asia – Lourdes Palapal, Director (the Philippines)
- Europe – Lorraine Nicholson, Director (United Kingdom)

As it is still early days for this new way of working, we discussed activities to date and possible future activities. It was agreed that this regional concept gave Directors a sharper focus and made them more responsive to the needs of both individual members and national members in their region. Each Director provided a report from their region.

Production of a Toolkit for New National Associations

The EC had previously agreed that IFHRO could help new national associations to become established by providing guidelines and practical help with respect to their constitution, management arrangements, financial arrangements, etc. I agreed to lead on this initiative, and the toolkit was produced after the conference in Dublin and is currently being field-tested in Singapore.

Relationships with other organisations

We discussed our relatively new working association with IMIA (International Medical Informatics Association) and our longer-standing relationship with the World Health Organization. We agreed that the relationship with IMIA was developing well and that the activities undertaken since the Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2000 were complementary and benefited both organisations. We felt that we needed to strengthen our links with WHO and to try to get some joint projects off the ground, as it had been some years since a joint initiative had been under-

taken. This forms part of our work programme for the next 12 months.

Executive Administration Manual

Philip Roxborough reported on the ongoing work to update the IFHRO Executive Administration Manual.

Strategic directions

Work has been ongoing for a number of years to ensure that IFHRO has a clear strategic direction and an associated realistic strategic plan. Jean Clark has been tasked with the update to the strategic plan.

National associations

Discussions took place regarding those national associations which had not paid their member dues. It was agreed that the regional directors would make contact to check on the current situation and to remind those organisations that if member dues remained unpaid by 31 December 2002 they would be removed from the roll of member nations. It is hoped that this personal intervention may obviate the need for such action.

Membership

An update was provided by the IFHRO Membership Task Group, which is chaired by Shirley Pilon, the Canadian IFHRO Director. This Task Group will be a crucial one for IFHRO’s future, as the Federation’s ability to undertake meaningful work depends on financial resources (which come mainly from member dues) and also human resources in the form of members willing to become involved in IFHRO’s activities.

Other issues

Lourdes Palapal provided an update on her liaison work with respect to the IFHRO Newsletter, which is still a key communication tool for IFHRO, particularly in the developing world.

A detailed update on the work of the European Task Group on harmonisation of health information management across European boundaries was also reported, while a progress report on arrangements for the 14th International Congress on Health Records, to be held in Washington, DC, 9-14 October 2004, was discussed.

The next meeting of the IFHRO Executive will be held in the Philippines in November 2003.

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