

WORDS FROM THE CHAIR



It is my privilege to welcome you officially to the IERASG website, the virtual home of what many of us older-timers have come to call fondly, “Hal’s Club”. You will find on this site an informative historical summary of the origin of the IERASG, to whom our founding is credited to the late, and certainly the great, Hallowell Davis, MD, former director of the Central Institute of the Deaf. However, Hal himself would likely have been quick to point out the importance of numerous others of the founding members of what quickly came to be known as the International Electric Response Audiometry Study Group.

The switch to the current “Evoked Response” moniker was implemented in the early 90’s, in the wake of rapidly developing research and subsequently clinical interests in otoacoustic emissions. The administrative body of the IERASG—the Council—thereby sought to more broadly represent objective measures in hearing/hearing-related assessment, having somewhat overlooked applications of acoustic reflex testing for such purposes in the past. This was hardly intended, and we are well interested in any method that ostensibly offers some level of objective corroboration of auditory function. We thus welcome to our primary “product”—the Biennial Symposium—participation of all workers in any area of evoked response testing dedicated to facilitation of assessment and monitoring of treatment relevant to hearing and auditory performance, not only objective/evoked-response audiometry (ERA) per se.

The name of our organization, especially the “Study Group” part, is admittedly modest, but deliberately so at its origin. Hal Davis and other founding members were “there” from day one. There were no experts in clinical electrophysiology dedicated uniquely to audiology. Yet, there were highly learned, competent, and motivated researchers and clinicians interested therein—from medicine, psychology, and the physical and biological sciences—and they were willing to “study”, do research, and come together to deliberate over what might be. We can and should hold dear this component of our name for the true pioneering spirit that it represented then and what is the unique motivation to keep the Club alive. Hal himself at one point confessed to wondering, even after one successful biennial symposium after another around the globe, had the IERASG reached its limit of value? In effect, had the Study Group run its course? However, upon summarizing the proceedings of the symposium in question, per the custom of the closing of each Symposium, he reckoned there still to be much to do in ERA and allied areas. There indeed has been astounding growth in research and development in the field since. And it is only in the pioneering spirit of the founding Club members and fellow workers to this day that we can hope to sustain needed research and development to hone the tools of clinical neurophysiology to our research and clinical needs well into the future.

The IERASG is not a scientific society as such. Although the Council has considered aspects from time to time that are the trappings of societies (including starting our own journal), we ultimately worked to avoid complex administrative structure and have chosen to simply stay dedicated to our “product”, the Biennial Symposium. General membership also has been reduced as much as possible—simply come join us in a biennial symposium.

The Biennial Symposia have a long and varied history of level and make-up of participation. This in part reflects the genuine long-standing motivation and effort to move the meetings around the world. Whereas the cost is that travel expenses and other factors may adversely affect potentially interested participants from afar, the payoff is increased accessibility to some other groups of workers about the globe than those more prominent in previous symposia. We thus take “International” seriously.

Interests also change in time, and more recently there is growing competition from a variety of other regional and international meetings with overlapping interests in ERA and related technology and applications. Yet, when you talk to various folks who have attended one or more symposia, there is a common theme in their expression of motivation to attend or at least to express regrets when the proverbial plate is simply too full or the serving of other priorities are unavoidable. This is two-fold: the very open and informal collegiality that characterizes our symposia, among younger and older workers alike; the symposia having served to foster some of the most enduring communications, collaborations, and even friendships among participants throughout their career.

Our formula for the Biennial Symposia is not “rocket science”. We work hard and play a bit, but always together and across all topical interests. The social program indeed is intended to complement opportunities presented via the formal program for both professional and cordial exchanges, with particular encouragement of young investigators to meet everyone they can, face-to-face, and without ceremony.

Presently and in coming years, the Council will be dedicated to not only perpetuation of the great tradition of Hal’s Club, but also to broadening its presence, as for example represented by the special workshop organized for the World Congress of Audiology in Brisbane, which falls in this the IERASG’s “off year”. The IERASG is officially affiliated with the International Society of Audiology, with respective congresses alternating between even and odd years. We look forward to furthering the pursuit of mutual interests with ISA, including promotion of our respective congresses and, together, the International Journal of Audiology. We thus look forward with great anticipation to Busan 2015 and invite you with the sincere hope that you can join us in the warm glow of the freedom of exchange of ideas and good old-fashioned Southern Korean hospitality.

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