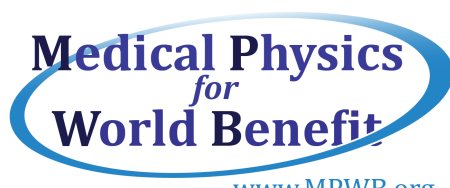


Benefit Exchange

A newsletter of *Medical Physics for World Benefit*



www.MPWB.org

Working together for effective patient care

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Introduction

As we produce this newsletter, the world is effectively in a lock-down mode as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, since most of our meetings and activities can be handled via internet communications, our work continues in anticipation that things will gradually return back to normal. The following highlights some of the activities in progress.

Keep Calm and Curie On!

As our community faces uncertain challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic, MPWB feels obliged to recognize this and share some important thoughts with our community.

First, it is of paramount importance that you follow directives of your local health authorities. Many jurisdictions are implementing strategies to mitigate the spread of the virus through social distancing and density reduction measures. The World Health Organization has [helpful information](#) on the public and health care workers. Please refer to your local and national health authorities for local directives and best practices. As healthcare workers, we have a collective responsibility to the patients and the public we serve.

Second, in a time of crisis it is always helpful to undertake some self-reflection. Many lives are being disrupted with these challenges: daycare closures, workplace changes, and many of you may be feeling the direct impacts of the virus yourselves. These events are occurring at a rapid rate and can be unsettling. We want to assure the MPWB community to 'Keep Calm and Curie On!'. We encourage you to stay healthy physically and mentally! The US CDC has [resources](#) for the latter.

These challenges will certainly impact the medical physics community. Many centers are unable to operate to their capacity, and others have their resources stretched thin. There is evidence that these challenges will persist for several weeks, if not months. This can be particularly frustrating for Medical Physicists who are natural problem solvers. We are particularly concerned over how this pandemic will affect low and middle income countries and their ability to safely deliver patient care. If you have ideas or thoughts on how we might be able to help solve these problems, we encourage you to share them with your local leaders. Please also feel free to use our [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#) social-media channels to share your thoughts. If you have thoughts or suggestions on how MPWB might be able to help with this pandemic, please share them through our social media channels or through medphyswb@gmail.com.

Annual Membership Renewals

The 2020 membership renewal notice has been sent out a while ago. Instructions for membership renewals can be found here:

<https://mpwb.org/resources/Documents/Steps%20to%20renew%20your%20MPWB%20membership%20dues.pdf>.

Membership fees are modest and are intended to demonstrate that members are serious about the vision, mission and objectives of MPWB.

Benefits for being a member include:

- receiving our newsletter which describes the activities of MPWB,
- opportunities to become involved in MPWB initiatives, activities, projects and governance,
- knowing your dues are going towards 'making a difference'!
- a tax deduction from either Canada or the USA.

We are fortunate and thankful that the Canadian Organization of Medical Physicists (COMP) has included an option for MPWB membership renewal in its annual renewal process.

Dosimetry Systems Delivery and Training

MPWB continues to work with the AAPM/IOMP Equipment Donation Program Subcommittee (EDPSC) for delivery of dosimetry systems and associated training for Medical Physicists in lower income environments. The intent was to deliver a system and provide training in Mexico, although that is now in abeyance until the covid-19 pandemic is eased and travel restrictions are removed. The Mexican delivery is a pilot for this project. Four questionnaires have been developed along with a letter of agreement between MPWB and the recipient institution. The 4 questionnaires relate to: (1) pre-visit survey to obtain information regarding the institution's status in terms of technology and staff; (2) an immediate post-visit survey regarding the success of the delivery and training; (3) a 6-month post-visit survey to determine the status of on-going communication and the use of the equipment; and (4) a 12-month post visit survey regarding the on-going communication and the use of the equipment. It is MPWB's intent to evaluate the success of these projects so that we will learn as we go along and improve as needed.

Open Syllabus

The goal of the Open Syllabus project is to provide on-line resources to medical physics trainees through the MPWB website. We are using Appendix IV (pages 53-112) of the IAEA clinical training document for Radiation Oncology Medical Physicists as the syllabus guide. The IAEA document can be found here: https://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/TCS-37_web.pdf. While MPWB was in communication with the IAEA last year regarding possible partnering with a part of their Advanced Medical Physics Learning Environment (AMPLE) project, eventually the IAEA determined that they could not make any part of that project open source. Hence, we are now in full swing seeking the best on-line resources and linking those with the syllabus contents. Since the IAEA syllabus was published over 10 years ago, we are also considering updates as appropriate. Presently, the Open Syllabus leadership team meets every two weeks. The frequency of these meetings is likely to decrease as the sub-teams addressing specific topics gain traction. For volunteers who are interested in participating in this project, please use the MPWB e-mail address to indicate your interest (medphyswb@gmail.com). The goal is to have this project functional by the end of 2020. We then hope to embark on the other areas of medical physics sub-specialization. **Finally, if you are aware of useful medical physics educational content please send a link or that content to medphyswb@gmail.com.**

Joint AAPM/COMP Meeting

We are again planning an MPWB information session at the joint AAPM/COMP meeting in Vancouver in July. The details regarding the time and location of the meeting remain to be finalized but will likely be at lunchtime on Wednesday 15 July 2020. One interesting aspect of the joint AAPM/COMP meeting is that it has a significant focus on international Medical Physics activities. To quote from the Annual Meeting subcommittee report "This year's meeting is all out international – the theme is *Improving Health Quality. Increasing Global Impact.*" In the AAPM President's report in the Jan/Feb issue of the AAPM Newsletter, he made a strong case for increasing the international profile and activities of the AAPM. Some of this was already evidenced by a couple of AAPM Task Group activities in preparation for some of the AAPM organizational restructuring in this context. Robert Jeraj and Jake Van Dyk were active participants in these Task Groups.

Challenges of International Activities

MPWB has been involved in a number of projects, especially related to developing education and mentoring programs in low-to-middle income countries, some related to individual cancer centers, others related to developing educational programs at universities. The experience with some of these projects is that they get off to an exciting start with much enthusiasm and vigor and then gradually appear to slow down due to a variety of barriers. The barriers range from complex university bureaucracy along with unplanned changes within the authority structure, to a lack of resources within individual centers so that they cannot make any commitments in support of the visiting mentor.

The MPWB philosophy is that we are willing to partner with organizations to provide added value assuming that the appropriate staff are available to benefit from mentoring support and assuming that there is a local commitment to supporting the visiting physicist. We have an attitude of working together, in partnership, and we make it very clear that we do not want to do the “work” for the institution because this may result in no added value for the existing staff.

Hence, some indication of a local commitment is an expectation on our part. In a survey performed by Jake Van Dyk in preparation for the IAEA Advances in Radiation Oncology meeting in 2017, it was noted by the locals that the two greatest factors that needed to be considered in overcoming technology implementation barriers were: (1) Appropriate prioritization by informed decision makers and/or upper level managers of resources for new techniques or technologies (9.0/10), and (2) Partnering with the IAEA or non-government organizations to provide partial education and training support (8.6/10).

We continue to strive to work with potential partners to advance on a variety of fronts. Much discussion takes place at our board meetings regarding these various projects.

Changes to our Website and Membership Payment Options

Have you seen our new website? Did you notice that it is also smart-phone friendly? Please share your thoughts on the website. If you have suggestions for improvement, let us know.

Also, we will be switching our default membership payment system from PayPal to an integrated payment system within our web-hosting platform. This will help reduce overhead expenses and allow membership payments to occur directly within our web-host. We are still configuring the option to allow users to use PayPal if they chose.



A gift for John Schreiner on his retirement from his place of employment in Kingston, Ontario on 27 Nov. 2019. "He's retired ... but not expired."