

# The UK Pleural Society

**P**leural disease is common, affecting 3000 people/million/year (Maskell, 2010). Lung cancer remains the leading cause of death for women aged 50–79 years in 2016 in England and Wales and the number of cases of cancers of the pleura is on the increase. It is anticipated that the number of mesothelioma cases (currently around 2300 cases/year in the UK) will reach its peak within the next decade (Peto et al, 1995).

With over 65 separate conditions affecting the pleura it is clear that pleural disease contributes hugely to the workload of respiratory physicians, who increasingly recognize pleural disease as a sub-specialty in its own right. There is therefore a need within the UK respiratory community to not only promote the understanding of pleural disease through education for growing numbers of specialists, but to facilitate high quality research focused on patient outcomes. The UK Pleural Society aims to address these needs.

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## Aims of the UK Pleural Society

The UK Pleural Society is a non-profit organization which was established in 2017 by Dr Mark Roberts (Consultant Respiratory Physician and Head of Service, Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), Professor Najib Rahman (Professor of Respiratory and Clinical Director of Oxford Respiratory Trials Unit, University of Oxford) and Dr Nicola Downer (Consultant Respiratory Physician, Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Trust). The society offers a unique opportunity for respiratory physicians interested in pleural disease to share best practice and knowledge through regular newsletters, courses and events organized under the auspices of the Society. It primarily targets respiratory physicians and trainees, but other specialists including nurses, allied health professionals and non-professionals are welcome to join.

## Research

The UK is fortunate in having some of the most research-active centres in the world in pleural disease, and through the British Thoracic Society Pleural Guidelines (2005 and 2010) has driven evidence-based practice. Twenty years ago, there were few high quality randomized studies in basic areas of pleural disease management. Since 2005 UK collaborative studies in pleural disease have recruited more than 2800 patients to randomized and observational studies and have published major, landmark work in this field (Maskell et al, 2005; Rahman et al, 2011, 2014, 2015; Davies et al, 2012; Bhatnagar et al, 2018; Mishra et al, 2018). This unique collaborative network has led to a clinical community of specialists who are interested in driving research, and the UK Pleural Society has a key aim of promoting such research to further our understanding and treatment of pleural disease.

## Sharing best practice: creating a pleural network

The Society supports research into pleural disease through the pleural research day.

This annual event, which will be running for the 8th time in 2019, and is hosted and organized by Oxford Respiratory Trials Unit and Dr Eleanor Mishra (Norfolk and Norwich Hospitals), brings together clinicians, research nurses, non-clinical research staff and industry interested in learning about current research and sharing results of recently completed studies.

Specialists from established pleural centres are invited to contribute to the development of the programme ensuring that it promotes a shared vision for the future of pleural research. The event is a great opportunity, especially for young researchers, to network, to get involved in a variety of research projects and to ensure they are up to date with latest developments. In 2018, researchers had the opportunity to submit scientific work presenting original research and audit, with abstracts reviewed and selected for oral and poster presentations, and winners were awarded prizes funded through membership fees.

When initially started, the event was aimed at collaborators in UK pleural studies, and hosted around 30 delegates. Last year this event attracted over 140 attendees from the UK and 17 research studies were discussed. These discussions often revealed that, despite the existence of guidelines, in practice treatments available to patients locally vary considerably. One of the aims of the Society is to ensure that pleural specialists in the UK work together to unify treatment pathways, drive up standards and disseminate good practice to the wider respiratory community. The founders of the Society recognize that pleural disease is a rapidly moving field and it is crucial that current interest in the area drives improvements in patient outcomes.

Pleural nurse specialists are increasingly supporting local pleural services, with many independently performing ultrasound and pleural procedures. The UK Pleural Society and pleural research day help these specialists develop and share skills, through networking opportunities, dedicated talks and sharing documentation.

### Other educational opportunities

The Society organizes the biennial pleural diseases course aimed at consultant and trainee clinicians and specialist nurses. The course is presented by an international faculty exploring common problems encountered in treating pleural disease. Interactive sessions combined with an opportunity for group discussion about pleural disease are specifically designed to maximize learning potential, covering areas from basic diagnostic methods to controversies in management of infection, malignancy and pneumothorax with researchers and specialists.

The UK thoracoscopy course and the UK thoracoscopy assistants courses hosted by Sherwood Forest Hospitals are run with the support of the Society. These hands-on courses are intended to complement the pleural diseases course. They offer a unique opportunity to clinicians and assistants to practice thoracoscopic skills and cover pre-procedure, monitoring and post-procedure care. Other pleural courses are advertised on the Society's website with the intention that this will become clinicians' first port of call for information on educational opportunities in pleural disease in the UK.

### UK Pleural Society: modus operandi

In order for this ambitious venture to be successful, the Society offers information, knowledge and opportunities which are not available elsewhere. It has to be affordable, easily accessible and make the most of modern technology to communicate with its members. The UK Pleural Society runs its own website ([www.pleura.org.uk](http://www.pleura.org.uk)) and members pay a small yearly fee (£20 in 2019) which is intended to fund the running of the Society, the website and to support development of the research prize fund.

A quarterly newsletter is sent to members to update them on recent developments. A PubMed feed has been introduced on the website to present recent scientific publications in pleural disease. Useful documents and links to relevant resources are available in the members' area of the website. Members receive a discounted rate for courses and events run under the auspices of the Society. Members of the Society as well as those simply interested in what is happening in the pleural community can benefit from regular Twitter feeds (@UKPleura).

The Society is in its first year and, although driven by a group of enthusiasts, its future very much depends on the active involvement of its members. The founders hope that any feedback received will help to ensure the Society meets the needs of the pleural community in the UK. It is imperative that members of the Society view it as a live organization that not only drives debate on the future of pleural disease but also supports respiratory clinicians and other health-care professionals in their daily work to better understand the nature of pleural disease and provide the best possible care to patients. **BJHM**

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### KEY POINTS

- Pleural disease is increasing across the UK and worldwide.
- Pleural medicine is now considered a subspeciality in its own right with associated procedures, clinical conditions and required training.
- There is a large volume of high quality clinical studies and quality improvement occurring in the UK in pleural disease.
- The UK Pleural Society has been formed for health professionals with an interest and expertise in pleural disease to share best practice, drive the research agenda and further cement the pleural community.

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