AO Latin America Jubilee Symposium  AO Latin America held its Jubilee Symposium in Puerto Iguazú (10–12 April), celebrating not only the AO’s first 50 years, but also the region’s first ten. The Latin American “AO family”—137 in total, with surgeons, spouses and guests—gathered at Puerto Iguazú, where Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay meet. AO Foundation President Chris van der Werken joined the first Scientific General Session via video conference and officially opened the Symposium. He pointed out the importance of the regional concept and the region’s service function for the AO Specialties. AOLAT President Carlos Sancineto reminisced about the beginnings of the region ten years ago. David Grainger, of the Biotechnology Advisory Board gave a scientific lecture on biotechnology. AOLAT’s “family spirit” was evident during a visit to nearby Iguazú Falls and during the festive Jubilee Gala Dinner.

3rd General Meeting of AO CPP FFOB  The third general meeting of the AO Clinical Priority Program, “Fracture Fixation in Osteoporotic Bone”, was held in Zurich (28–29 March) to discuss goals reached over the previous year and to set objectives for the next. The CPP FFOB Program consists of twelve projects with a comprehensive overview of treating geriatric fractures. Fifty-five participants were given updates by project groups showing how far the program has advanced—some projects have already reached the clinical investigation stage or have led to follow-up projects being defined. Davis Marsh lectured on co-managing the clinical process between surgeons, anesthetists, and geriatricians in treating elderly patients with osteoporotic fractures.
Nonoperative trauma/ORP courses
Lusaka hosted a nonoperative trauma course (13–15 March) organized by James Munthali of the University Teaching Hospital (UTH) in Lusaka, Zambia, and the AO Foundation’s Socio Economic Committee. Taking part were three international faculty members, seven local faculty members, and two senior registrars in orthopedics who train at UTH. Twenty doctors who treat orthopedic patients throughout the country, plaster technicians, and a few ORP nurses participated. Lectures emphasizing nonoperative techniques were followed by practical exercises focusing on plaster techniques and the reduction of common fractures such as distal radial fractures in adults and Salter-Harris fractures in children. Running simultaneously, an AO course for ORP on “Principles in Operative Management of Fractures” was also hosted by the UTH. Twenty-six nurses from six of Zambia’s nine provinces attended, as well as a team of international and local faculty members.

From the AO Institutes

AO Development (ADI)
Now that DensiProbe™ Hip—the diagnostic instrument for intraoperative measurement of bone strength—has proven successful in a two-center clinical case study that started at the end of 2007, the evaluation of this one-of-a-kind method will be broadened to include a multi-center study with five European clinics. All participating clinics qualified to take part based on their specialization in osteoporosis treatment.

AO Education (AOE)
The Trustees Meeting enabled AO Education to share with Trustees the results of the assessment tool kit that has been developed over the last two years. These results showed how the tool kit can be used to make education more effective and gave all the Trustees an insight into the complexity of ensuring that education results in improved patient care. At the same meeting, AOE also presented an outline proposal—AO Life Long Learning—which will enable the AO Foundation to interact with its members throughout the entire length of their professional careers.

AO Research Institute (ARI)
In a stable internal fixation system (ie, locked), where there is minimal damage to the periosteal vasculature, polishing of titanium and titanium alloy (TAN) does not have a large influence on the infection rate. Therefore, polishing that has previously been shown in ARI both to ease implant removal, by prevention of bony integration, and to prevent gliding tissue damage, could be clinically implemented with plates and screws, since we now show that it does not reduce infection resistance.

AO Clinical Investigation & Documentation (AOCID)
With the successful integration of changes required by Schatzalp 1, AOCID is now ready to assume its role as the competence center for clinical investigation. • AOCID is ready to start patient recruitment for the ASLS study after only four months’ of preparation, demonstrating the entire team’s efficiency. • Intensive discussions between Synthes and AOCID will result in several new studies being performed in collaboration with Synthes’s clinical department.
AOAA celebrates AO’s 50th anniversary in Greece  This year the AO Alumni Association (AOAA) is hosting three events, and Thessaloniki in Greece hosted the first (15–17 April), right after regional courses. Events for the CMF specialty, Trauma, and ORP ran concurrently. AO Foundation President Chris van der Werken opened the event and AOAA President Antonio Pace (Trauma), Joachim Prein (CMF), and Nicola Kildea (ORP) introduced the following days’ agendas. The trauma course focused on intra-articular fractures of the upper extremity, management of the geriatric fracture patient, and featured a short lecture followed by hands-on workshops. CMF members heard lectures on CMF treatment and programs, before participating in a BrainLAB hands-on planning and virtual surgery workshop. ORP course participants received the latest news from the regions, and the newly formed Education Steering Group presented their strategy findings. Regional strategy, mentorship, team building, and educational support rounded off the course.

AO at Eurotrauma 2008  The European Society for Trauma and Emergency Surgery (ESTES) held its first congress, Eurotrauma 2008, in Budapest, Hungary (24–27 May), hosting 1,500 participants from four continents. An AO jubilee symposium, “Controversies in Intramedullary Nailing”, attracted 160 participants. Jenő Manninger, Max Landolt, Thomas Rüedi, and Michael Nerlich received honorary awards for assisting the AO in Hungary. Over 500 participants visited the AO Foundation’s booth to view the AO Surgery Reference. At the closing gala dinner in Budapest’s History Museum, Vilmos Vécsei led a spontaneous toast to the AO’s first 50 years.

AO tri-country meeting in Dresden  Some 153 participants from Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and a few from Eastern Europe, travelled to Dresden at end-May for a top-class scientific and social program. Otto Wieland received an honorary membership for establishing the AO Principles in the former East Germany and the AO Germany scientific prize went to Jan Korner. AO Foundation President Chris van der Werken and AOVA Chairman Markus Rauh spoke about the AO’s current status around the world, with a special look at Europe and Germany. Top class reports from research institute leaders were given and world-renowned experts from Germany, Switzerland and Austria reported on current developments and results in trauma surgery and orthopedics.
BritSpine and SpineWeek  AOSpine attended the fifth annual BritSpine congress in Belfast (April 30–May 2), which combined keynote lectures with interactive debates and free paper sessions. Over 300 participants presented research papers on a wide spectrum of spinal conditions. AOSpine provided the Audience Response System used to evaluate presentations and AOSpine’s Alex Vaccaro and Kenneth Cheung delivered keynote lectures. AOSpine also took part in the second SpineWeek meeting held in Geneva (26–31 May) where over 2,000 participants presented research papers and discussed cases. AOSpine members John Webb, Mike Janssen, Alexander Vaccaro, Jeffrey Wang, J-M Vital, and Bernard Jeanneret participated as faculty. The first combined AOSpine and EANS seminar took place on May 27, 2008, on “Imaging and Navigation in Spine Surgery”. Forty participants enjoyed some very active discussions and debates.

ECM IX Musculoskeletal Trauma: 50 Years of AO Research  The 9th European Cells and Materials conference was held in the Congress Center in Davos, Switzerland (June 15–18). The scientific program was put together by Geoff Richards and Mauro Alini of the AO Research Institute, and by Charlie Archer from Cardiff University in Wales. The conference was structured to highlight 50 years of AO research. AO collaborators both past and present showcased the achievements of AO research during their time there and also what they have done since leaving. The wide scope of AO Research within the field of trauma was highlighted. Separate sessions were organized for each of the main research fields of the AO Research Institute: Bone, Cartilage, Spine, and Infection. Tribute was paid to Iolo ap Gwynn from the University of Wales in Aberystwyth who has worked in biological electron microscopy for over 40 years. ECM X Stem Cells for Musculoskeletal Regeneration: From Basic Biology to Clinical Issues is scheduled for June 29 to July 2, 2009, in Davos.

EFORT Congress in Nice  The annual Congress took place in Nice, France, (May 29–June 1) and many of the 2,500 participants explored topics in addition to traumatology. The scientific program was put together by AOVA member Pierre Hoffmeyer of Geneva. The AO hosted a very attractive booth whose theme was the AO’s 50th anniversary, and associated problems of fracture fixation in osteoporotic bone—one of the AO Foundation’s Clinical Priority Programs. Participants learned about the AO Portal, in particular the AO Surgery Reference. The AO Jubilee Symposium, introduced by Joachim Prein, Vice-Director of AO Education, described the AO, its history and structure with particular focus on educational activities globally. An outdoor jubilee reception immediately after the symposium celebrated the AO’s first 50 years.
Dr Phillip G Spiegel  

Dr Phillip G Spiegel, born on July 6, 1936, in Chicago, Illinois, sadly passed away on June 26, 2008. He was a real pioneer of AO techniques in North America, serving as the Chairman of several early AO courses in the Region. He became Professor and Chairman of the Department of Orthopedics at the University of South Florida in Tampa in the early 1980s, and built up that unit into one of the premier orthopedic trauma education centers in the world, a reputation it still enjoys today. Dr Spiegel was also the founding editor of the Journal of Orthopaedic Trauma. He was a mentor to many AO surgeons, and he was famous at AO courses for his “How not to do AO” presentation, which was quite humorous and ended each course on a lighthearted note. He was also one of the original AO Trustees when the Foundation was formed in 1984.

Professor Philippe Vichard  

Professor Philippe Vichard, born on March 26, 1931, in Laxou, France, passed away on July 12, 2008. He was an AO pioneer in France and a great supporter of the AO’s mission. Over the years Professor Vichard was regularly invited to participate actively as a faculty member. He was instrumental in setting up the French Chapter of the AO Alumni Association in 1989 and was elected as a Trustee of the AO Foundation in 1991 and went on to become a Senior Trustee. An enthusiastic and wise teacher, he took an active part in the courses held in France. AO members from the French-speaking part of Switzerland held him in high regard, knowing that they could count on him to further the AO philosophy. This great teacher and master in his field will be missed by very many.

Naeder Helmy  

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After training with Otmar Trentz and Christian Gerber in orthopedic surgery, I was looking outside of Switzerland to broaden my knowledge in the subspecialty of orthopedic trauma. My academic career also needed a ‘blast’ so I applied for a fellowship position in Vancouver.

The Vancouver General Hospital is a level 1 trauma centre and the tertiary referral centre of the Province of British Columbia, which covers a land mass three times that of Germany! Coming from a very small country I was overwhelmed by the size of the hospital, the catchment area, the number of complex articular injuries, and the amount of acetabular and pelvic ring injuries treated there. As a trauma fellow I worked very closely with all the staff surgeons, enhancing the learning experience, as I was exposed to different treatment modalities and surgical techniques. The fellowship program is designed as an excellent hands-on experience and provides a fruitful teaching environment.

My year in Vancouver was clinically and also academically, a full success. Working closely with the Department of Orthopedic Research, I successfully completed several papers. I also had the opportunity to complete clinical studies with the Department of Orthopedic Trauma and with the Department of Anesthesiology. The AO gave my wife, three children and me the opportunity to live a fantastic year in Vancouver! This unique experience has had a great impact on my daily life and made it possible to meet great teachers and make friends all over the world.

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Trauma fellows at Vancouver General Hospital (l to r): Ralph Schoniger, Switzerland, Paul Fearon, Great Britain, and Naeder Helmy, Switzerland.
Let’s imagine the early days when 13 pioneers set out to create something special. Besides the main push given the AO by its five leaders, eight surgeons from Swiss hospitals formed a study group to test the newly created instruments Maurice E Müller and Robert Mathys created in 1958. Each of these placed his work under the level of scientific scrutiny necessary to convince their “enemies” of its merit. Imagine their enthusiasm as they witnessed a revolution in fracture care condensed in a systematic fashion to instrumentation withstanding scientific testing that could be taught through courses and hands-on exercises. The AO was a growing continuum of efforts, successes, and ups and downs that gained momentum and became something absolutely unique, enduring until today. It is medicine universally applicable, a philosophy uniting us the world over, based upon achieving something together, as a group. The 13 founding fathers were good friends. Today, three original members remain to inspire us—Walter Stähli, 97, still full of the pioneer spirit, August Guggenbühl, 90 this November—both send their best regards to the AO community; and of course, Maurice E Müller, 90, the master and the “maker”, to whom we owe the most!

Gregor Strasser: a singular dedication to the AO’s goals, principles and programs  In 2000, as President-Elect of the AO Foundation, I had the opportunity to interview candidates for the new Chief Executive Officer position of the AO Foundation. I vividly remember Gregor Strasser arriving for his interview and proceeding to pull from his briefcase a binder that was about 6 inches thick and placing it on the table. I asked Gregor what was in the binder. He turned to me and said, “AO.” It became obvious during the interview that Gregor Strasser was extremely well prepared. He knew more about the Foundation, its products, its goals, its objectives, and its surgeons than most of the Foundation’s surgeons did. Over the next six years, this dedication to the AO and its goals, principles and programs was the mark of Gregor’s leadership as CEO. He was instrumental in establishing a professional business administration in the Foundation and was supportive of its membership initiatives and regionalization program. Gregor also understood the needs of the volunteer surgeons and worked hard to assure that every surgeon, scientist and ORP who participated in the Foundation’s activities was treated with respect and friendship. As Gregor leaves the Foundation, we are saddened, but we also wish him the best in his career. It has been an excellent six years.

AO Past-President Jim Kellam