



Association of British Neurologists

Strategic Review 2018

Approved ABN AGM 10 May 2018

Introduction

The ABN 2018 strategic review builds on the work of the 2013 strategy, determining the role of the ABN in supporting and developing neurological services, training and research. Whilst the strategic aims have altered little since 2013, or indeed since the early days of the association, the environment in which its members live and work continues to evolve. Perennial issues such as training, development, ethics and the impact of NHS and government policies gain further layers of complexity through the influence of international, demographic and technological changes.

The full impact of Brexit has yet to be determined but it is clear that we will need to work hard to overcome new barriers in recruitment and research whilst maintaining our long standing relationships with international colleagues and institutions.

The shape of the neurological workforce is also changing. The gaps in neurological care across the country have been well documented and, although the number of consultant neurologists has risen, so too has the proportion of less than full time contracts. When combined with the increasing need for neurologists, there is no doubt that much needs to be done to maintain appropriate and consistent service levels.

Technological advances have unquestionably supported our work but the benefits of new diagnostic techniques, telemedicine and improved communications bring fresh responsibilities to provide guidance in their correct use and new vulnerabilities, including recent concerns over the use of eportfolios.

Developing the next generation of neurologists is a priority, protecting and enhancing access to the necessary level of specialist training, and challenging the significant disparities in the level of undergraduate teaching across the country. Our annual conferences play a key role in continued professional development and we are working to improve access to neurological training through courses for colleagues in GIM and general practice, and overseas through support of a WFN programme, training African neurologists in Africa.

Research is essential to the delivery of high quality care and is central to the ABN mission. In addition to its flagship clinical research training fellowship programme, the ABN recognises the need to enhance engagement with its members' research interests, improving access to information about research activity, providing leadership and attracting the best speakers, clinical and academic, to its conferences.

Across all areas of ABN activity it is vital that we look outwards and build relationships, not just among neurologists but actively engaging with other neuroscience and medical organisations, government entities and international colleagues. The ABN will continue to work with a range of national and international organisations to provide leadership and influence policy.

The ABN's ability to respond to the above challenges is facilitated by broad and high quality engagement from its members through council, sub committees (Services, Education, Research, Quality, Trainees and Fundraising) and its 12 sub specialty advisory groups. The ABN office's role has expanded to meet the growing needs of the association, supported by the increased income from a growing membership and conference attendance.

In reviewing the ABN's strategic aims for 2018 and beyond we have focused on three core areas of activity, each championed by one of the sub committees of council:

- To improve clinical neurological services and provide leadership in neurology services delivery
- To champion outstanding training and education in neurology
- To promote world class research in clinical neurosciences.

Although addressed separately in this document, the interdependence of the committees' work is recognised and the strength of the collaborative working among council, committee and wider membership is acknowledged.

On behalf of ABN council.



Mary M Reilly
ABN President 2017-19

A. Background

The 2013 ABN strategic review documented the development of the ABN from a “small organisation with an informal secretariat and a membership that could comfortably fit in a single room” to a much larger organisation requiring professional management of its meetings and membership. It recognised the drivers for change, not only in the make-up of the association but also the political, social and professional environment in which it operated.

Following a full day Council meeting in 2012 and informed by subsequent consultation with members, the ABN Council brought its proposals for a 5 year strategy to the Annual General meeting in 2013.

The ABN’s 2013 stated mission was: “to promote excellent standards of care and champion high-quality education and world-class research in neurology”. Five key strategic aims were agreed and key actions identified for each:

1. To improve clinical neurological services
2. To provide leadership in neurology
3. To champion outstanding training and education in neurology
4. To promote world class research in clinical neurosciences
5. To represent and promote the aims of the Association internationally

Progress towards fulfilling these strategic objectives has been reported at each subsequent Council meeting.

In such rapidly moving and occasionally turbulent times, Council felt it was both necessary and appropriate to review the ABN Strategy in 2016/2017, with the aim of producing an updated 5 year strategy by 2018. Therefore, in late 2016 ABN members were asked via an online survey to provide their reflections on the 2013 strategy and to provide input to a refreshed document, taking into account both the changing landscape of neurology service delivery, training and research and the needs of neurology patients and ABN members. A full day council meeting in 2017 was devoted to updating the 2013 strategy, informed by the insights and input gleaned from the ABN membership. This was followed by further work and consultation throughout 2017 with completion of the strategic review by January 2018.

B. Preparation

A review of the survey revealed that ABN Members agreed that the 2013 strategic aims were still relevant (97% of respondents) and that the ABN had made reasonable progress in meeting those objectives (80% of respondents). The difficulties of a small society seeking to impact upon national policies were noted and several commented that the 2013 aims should be considered as work in progress. Members highlighted the importance of the ABN to be truly representative across all member countries, across both clinical and academic neurology, and across all neurology sub-specialities.

In reviewing the five strategic aims defined in 2013, Council noted that two of the aims, “To provide leadership in neurology” and “To represent and promote the aims of the

Association internationally”, had relevance to each of the remaining three core aims and so were in effect cross cutting themes. Sound financial management and robust, fit for purpose organisational structure were also agreed to be key cross-cutting themes underpinning all aspects of ABN strategy.

The three remaining core strategic aims each mapped to one of the main sub committees of council.

Services and Standards	To improve clinical neurological services
Training and Education	To champion outstanding training and education in neurology
Clinical Research & Academic	To promote world class research in clinical neurosciences

Working groups, led by the chairs of the three subcommittees, examined the progress made by the ABN in fulfilling the 2013 aims, noted any current activity and relevant issues and produced proposals for discussions by the wider council. A decision was made during the preparation phase, and ratified by ABN members at the 2017 AGM in Liverpool, to simplify the names of the three subcommittees to Services committee (SC), Education committee (EC) and Research committee (RC) respectively and to add a new Quality committee (QC).

C. Core Strategic aims

1. To improve clinical neurological services and provide leadership in neurology services delivery

ABN work in this area is coordinated by the Services committee and from 2017, Quality committee.

1.1. 2013 strategy review

1.1.1 Summary of 2013 objectives:

- Encouraging the nationwide availability of excellent, patient-centred services in neurology.
- Setting and promoting evidence-based standards for neurological care.
- Supporting members in developing and delivering high quality services.
- Providing an expert voice to represent neurology to Government and other agencies.
- Promoting public engagement with and involvement in neurology.
- Facilitating links with other professional societies involved in neurology.
- Collaborating with neurological charities in advocacy for neurological services.

1.1.2 2013 actions

Introduce audit committee and structure	• Audit, Revalidation and Outcome committee set up 2014.
Provide revalidation support	
Provide website endorsement	• Website was redeveloped and is updated regularly.
Establish process for affiliation of other societies	• Affiliated societies and SIGs merger approved at AGM 2016
Develop broader categories of membership	• New categories for students and junior doctors added 2013.

1.2. 2018 development plan

The overarching goal for service and standards remains as defined in 2013; that is, to improve clinical neurological services and provide leadership in neurology service delivery. The 2013 objectives were considered still appropriate but new key actions to help deliver both this goal and the objectives were identified and include:

1.2.1 Building Relationships with broader community

- Include reports from the Services committee in ABN monthly newsletter.
- Share updates from Executive committee and council with Services committee members.

- Build strategic relationships with regional and / or local neurology groups (e.g. SWENA, NENA and SENA) through Services committee membership.
- Build on relationships with charitable organisations via Neurological Alliance to build patient perspective into the Services committee work plan.
- Create liaison with joint specialties such as stroke in service development initiatives.
- Work closely with the Quality committee to ensure quality is at the heart of all service committee developments. .

1.2.2 Increasing engagement of the Services committee (SC) membership

- Regular contact through combination of face-to-face and remote meetings and ad hoc discussions where required
- Involve committee members in other externally facing working groups, e.g. Commissioning Toolkit and Acute Neurology Survey.
- Extend involvement in key projects beyond committee tenure, where appropriate.

1.2.3 Developing an ABN Service Improvement Strategy

- Build an accurate, current map of neurology workforce in the UK both consultant and trainee to:
 - Identify areas with persistent recruitment issues
 - Develop ideas to address issues of workforce shortfall, working with the other ABN committees
- Develop a better understanding of the variations in service delivery across the UK
 - Develop projects using the Acute Neurology Survey (ANS) data and regional representation input to review geographical variation in access, investigations and training
 - Engage with the GIRFT (“Getting it Right First Time”) programme
 - Investigate the various systems of patient triage referral around the UK
- Identify areas of priority for development of standards and guidelines required working with the Quality committee
- Engage with the Clinical Reference Group (CRG) to develop service specification standards
- Engage with NNAG (National Neurological Advisory Group) and NIN (Neurological Intelligence Network) to improve service delivery in relation to implementation of national policy.
- Provide leadership for neurology services policy development and delivery locally and nationally as necessary.
- Provide input to the development of neurology services policy and delivery internationally as necessary.

1.2.4 Enhancing audit/quality improvement outputs through creation of a separate Quality committee (QC)

- **Committee scope:** All matters related to quality, quality improvement, innovation, audit and revalidation.
- **Structure:** An appointed chair with an elected membership with broad geographical representation, and fixed terms of office.
- **Profile:** Raise the profile and articulate the importance of quality at all levels within the ABN aiming to ensure that quality is everyone's business.
- **Information:** Provide support and information for members on quality assurance, quality improvement and innovation.
- **Processes:** Develop quality assurance processes and improvement methodology within the ABN to support.
 - Clinical practice guideline development
 - Use of clinical and service audit in quality assurance, quality improvement and innovation
 - Revalidation
 - ABN processes in other areas of the organisation to maximize effectiveness in meeting ABN member's needs
- **Measurement:** identify appropriate quality practices and outcomes.

2. To champion outstanding training and education in neurology

ABN work in this area is coordinated by the Education committee

2.1. 2013 strategy review

2.1.1 Summary of 2013 objectives

- Providing and supporting high quality continuing neurology education.
- Disseminating neurological research and sharing best practice.
- Setting and promoting high standards of training.
- Encouraging the best neurological education and training in medical schools and medical training programmes.

2.1.2 2013 actions

Regional representation for Training and Education committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regional representation achieved 2013.• Applications for chair opened to wider membership 2016
Increase involvement in foundation and core medical training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shape of Training response.• Foundation doctors and GP sessions at the Pre Annual Meeting Training and Development day•
Increase involvement in medical student education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ABNT launched pilot mentoring scheme in 2014.• Undergraduate curriculum document published 2015• Undergraduate teaching day introduced 2016
Acquire or launch a journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practical Neurology co-publishing agreement with BMJ from 2015.
Overseas fellowships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ABN Australasian Fellowship introduced 12-month clinical placements in Australasia to complement the clinical training in the UK.

2.2. 2018 development plans

The overarching goal for teaching and training remains as 2013; that is, to champion outstanding training and education in neurology. The 2013 objectives were considered still appropriate but new key actions to help deliver both this goal and the objectives were identified and include:

2.2.1 Developing Undergraduate education

- Promote excellent undergraduate neurology teaching and delivery of the curriculum across the UK.
- Scope current state of neurology undergraduate (UG) teaching to identify examples of best practice.
- Draft recommendations for National Neurology Teaching Standards and discuss implementation of these recommendations with Medical School Deans.

- Support UG teaching with ABN-branded and approved web-based resources: Video examination/ABN lectures/Undergraduate teaching days (linked with NANSIG)
- Develop a range of models of undergraduate training days to suit different regional venues.

2.2.2 Developing Postgraduate training

- Ensure new training schemes deliver high quality internationally competitive neurology training, and are attractive to high quality FY/IM1-3 trainees.
- Collect information on the range and quality of postgraduate neurology education.
- Work with deaneries/ABNT/Neurology SAC to deliver high quality training programmes within the new structures mandated by Shape of Training.
- Advise and assist in the development of new rotas and standards of service for acute training posts (synergistic activity with SC).
- Support out of programme activity and research (synergistic activity with Research committee).
- Support and develop the ABNT Mentoring Programme.

2.2.3 Improving neurology standards in Internal Medical (IM) Specialities

- Work with medical colleagues to raise neurology standards in other specialities
- Survey the range of neurology education in General IM programmes and promote high quality IM programmes that deliver neurological training.
- Engage with GIM colleagues at all levels to deliver high quality neurology examination and practice (RCP linked with BGS/ED/Acute medicine groups).
- Engage with GPs to develop and assist delivery of relevant neurology training
- Develop innovative high impact teaching for CMT/GIM trainees (simulation/web-based teaching).

2.2.4 Providing leadership for neurology training policy development and delivery locally and nationally, as necessary.

2.2.5 Providing input to development of neurology training internationally as appropriate.

3. To promote world class research in clinical neurosciences

ABN work in this area is coordinated by the Research committee

3.1. 2013 strategy review

3.1.1 Summary of 2013 objectives

- Supporting trainee and trained neurologists in both undertaking and supporting research.
- Enabling patients to participate in research.
- Promoting and co-ordinating research training in neurology.
- Providing a forum to present, discuss and develop collaborative research.
- Promoting collaborative neurological research, lobbying for neurological research funding and translation into practice.

3.1.2 2013 actions

Regional representation for CRAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional representation achieved 2013. • Applications for chair opened to wider membership 2016
Start an ABN research training fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund launched at 2014 annual meeting. • Opt out voluntary donation agreed at AGM 2015 • Fundraising committee formed May 2015. • 2 fundraising/awareness events held 2015. • Fundraising consultancy provided by CAF/Patrick Berthoud Charitable Trust 2015. • Fundraiser appointed Sept 2016. • Formula agreed to transfer excess reserves to fellowship fund 2017.
Develop a research training network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research workshop added to Pre Annual Meeting Training and Development day from 2014. • Active involvement of ABN appointed research fellows in ABN research strategy dissemination and delivery

3.2. 2018 development plan

The overarching goal for research remains as 2013; that is, to promote world-class research in clinical neurosciences. The 2013 objectives were considered still appropriate but were simplified into three key objectives:

- Recognising research as an essential component in the delivery of high quality care.
- Building research capacity and capability.
- Effective international collaboration and **communication**.

Key actions to help deliver both this goal and the objectives were identified and include:

3.2.1 Improving internal structures to reflect strategic objectives

- Rename BNSU to reflect its current purpose e.g. Rare Disease Ascertainment & Recruitment (RaDAR) with Research committee assuming responsibility for development of the platform and improving ABN member response rates.

3.2.2 Enhancing engagement with members' research interests

- Develop an ABN members' database that may be interrogated for common research activity and sub-specialist interests.
- Increase the perceived relevance of the ABN to University-employed neurologists including the attractiveness of the annual meeting to present latest research.
- Establish a network of integrated academic trainees in neurology (ACF and ACL levels) and aim to establish broader collaborative networks that include other neurology trainees within regional Deaneries keen to engage in research activity.

3.2.3 Supporting early career researchers

- Promote the ABN Research Fellowships:
 - achieve a minimum of three awards on a recurrent annual basis, with solid financial underpinning.
- Increase the attractiveness and opportunity for all neurology trainees to pursue a clinician scientist career or at least have some exposure to research methods (not necessarily towards a higher degree) as an integral part of their training.
- Provide leadership for neurosciences research policy development and delivery locally and nationally as necessary.
- Continue to develop research-focused workshops as part of the Pre Annual Meeting Training and Development day, highlighting research career paths, research techniques and grantsmanship skills.

3.2.5 Providing input to research developments internationally as appropriate.

D. Strategic cross cutting themes

1. Leadership

Providing leadership across all themes (service, training and research) locally and nationally is an important aim of the ABN. Each core theme will be monitored going forward for success in this cross cutting aim.

2. International role

The ABN is an outward looking organisation in addition to its national roles. There are international aspects, opportunities and roles available across all themes. Each core theme (service, training and research) will be monitored for its engagement with, and success in, tackling this cross cutting aim.

3. Financial Management

The Association's income is derived predominantly from its annual conferences and from membership subscriptions (50% of all income and expenditure is related to conferences). Additional income is derived from cooperative agreements with the RCP (for its Specialist Certificate examination) and with the British Medical Journal (co-publishing agreement for Practical Neurology journal).

The Association directs its surplus income to supporting neurological training and education in the UK, via the ABN Clinical Research Training Fellowship fund, and abroad via the WFN African teaching fellowship.

Reserves are invested in Charibonds and in interest bearing bank accounts. The ABN aims to maintain reserves equivalent to at least 1.25 times annual expenditure and in 2016 agreed that reserves above that level could be transferred to the restricted ABN Clinical Research Training Fellowship fund.

Financial matters are managed by the Executive Director in consultation with, and with the approval of, the Honorary Treasurer and the ABN Council.

E. Organisational structure

The administrative team has responsibility for managing all aspects of the Association's activities including membership, committees, conferences, consultations, communications and journal.

In 2013 the ABN administrative resource consisted of a newly appointed Executive Director plus two members of staff. Expansion in the work of the Association has, however, increased the amount of administrative resource required. Recognising the challenges in introducing new roles within such a small team the ABN will:

- Employ external consultancy support where appropriate to shape Associations' strategic plans for areas where in house expertise is currently lacking, e.g. media, fundraising.
- Introduce temporary staff members as required (proposed by Executive Director and approved by Executive committee) and assess the role and type of resource required before making a permanent appointment.

Conclusion

This document represents a refreshing of the 2013 ABN Strategy. It is not intended to be a re-write of the aims of that document, which members agree remain valid and pertinent in 2018. But this document sets the previously determined aims in a current context, given the rapidly changing UK medical landscape in service delivery, education, and research.

Council will continue to monitor the delivery of this refreshed ABN Strategy on a regular basis, and will ensure the membership is kept up to date on progress. We also welcome additional ideas or comments to inform future strategy. ABN Strategy will be reviewed at least 5 yearly.