

MAIL³⁶⁰



We'd like your views – write to: The Editor, *Bone & Joint*³⁶⁰,
22 Buckingham Street, London WC2N 6ET or email editor360@boneandjoint.org.uk

Hidden costs of speaking at conferences

Dear Sir,

Lecturing at conferences falls disproportionately on a relatively small number of orthopaedic surgeons. They give of their services for preparation and lecturing *pro bono* and have normally received travel expenses and overnight accommodation of a reasonable standard to reduce the degree to which they are out of pocket. Common decency dictates that surgeons do not exploit this and travel as economically as possible but it is unreasonable to expect them to do so in cramped economy class over anything other than two hours and business or first class should be provided for journeys longer than this.

Regular lecturers lose time not only in preparation but from absence from their practices, and face additional day-to-day living expenses that are never covered, such as parking at airports, taxi fares and refreshments and meals taken during the journey.

An unwelcome recent trend is to ask speakers to pay registration fees for the conferences to which they have been invited and which they would not normally attend.

The problem is further compounded by the settlement of expenses in arrears, often after copious reminders, the sending of which further erodes precious time of which much has already been disbursed. Enthusiastic administrators often insist on presentation of receipts in a specialised format and return them for minor discrepancies, further consuming speakers' time in defraying the expenses they have incurred.

It would seem sensible to gain an international consensus on the terms under which speakers lecture at such conferences.

The areas that should be included are cost of preparation time, business or first class transport, accommodation and day-to-day living expenses. All these should be anticipated, and the speaker compensated by cheque or proof of bank transfer at the conference venue before they leave. Conference fees should automatically be waived.

An international contract incorporating all of the above should be developed, and a copy signed by conference organisers should accompany the formal invitation to speak.

Gordon Bannister, MD, MChOrth, FRCSEd(Orth), Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, Avon Orthopaedic Centre, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol UK