



■ EDITORIAL

The Bone and Joint Decade 2000 to 2010

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At a meeting held in Lund, Sweden in April 1998, a steering group, chaired by Lars Lidgren, Professor of Orthopaedics at the University of Lund, put forward the idea of instituting a Bone and Joint Decade along the lines of the successful similar decade for the neurosciences which was concluding. The aim of the Bone and Joint Decade (BJD) was to highlight the expected increase in musculoskeletal problems which would occur, particularly in view of aging populations. In spite of the great advances which had been made in the management of skeletal disability, millions of people throughout the world suffer unnecessary pain and handicap. In order to make society aware of the suffering and cost due to musculoskeletal disease, pressure would be required to influence government at national and international levels in order to improve the organisation and resources required to deal with it. Such a task would need a world-wide multidisciplinary effort and the BJD was formed to help co-ordinate this by publicity, pressure and participation. The organisation wished to promote relationships with patients, professional and scientific organisations, research bodies, scientific journals, providers of healthcare, governments and non-governmental organisations throughout the world. The concept of the BJD was endorsed by the Secretary General of the United Nations and formally launched at the headquarters of the World Health Organisation in Geneva in 2000.

National Action Networks were established within individual countries in order to co-ordinate efforts towards promotion of the BJD and they are now active in 62 countries. In the United Kingdom this role has been given to the Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance (ARMA).

The BJD has been successful in promoting its aims at the United Nations, particularly in efforts to lower the incidence of road traffic accidents. World Health Day in 2004 focused on this problem and further attention was drawn to them in the meeting of the General

Assembly in that year, when the World Report on the Prevention of Injury in Road Traffic Accidents was adopted and governments were urged to introduce its recommendations in their own countries. The United Nations have declared 2010 to 2020 as the global Decade of Action for Road Safety.

Other aspects of the work of the BJD include participation in the production of guidelines for the management of fractures about the hip and for the treatment of chronic pain. The BJD has sought to increase awareness of the rising incidence of osteoporosis and its attendant complications, in particular those related to fragility fractures. A network to improve their management was launched in 2009.

Concern has been expressed as to the inadequacy of teaching about musculoskeletal disease at undergraduate level, and pressure has been placed on universities to increase the amount and quality of this instruction in their curricula.

The BJD is actively involved in the European Bone and Joint Health Strategies Project which has been undertaken by the European community.

Within the United Kingdom ARMA produced a framework document for musculoskeletal services which was launched by the Secretary of State for Health in 2006. This identified best practice but did not create priorities or targets for their implementation. It received government approval but no funds were identified for its introduction. Indeed, according to a report from the King's Fund, although there has been an increase in overall spending in the NHS, that for musculoskeletal services and trauma has decreased.¹ ARMA has lobbied for the appointment of a National Clinical Director for Musculoskeletal Disease in order to raise its profile within the Department of Health.

A national hip fracture database has been set up in order to record the management and outcome of every hip fracture and allow the overall assessment of these injuries on a national basis.

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