

# History of the International Association for Ambulatory Surgery 2001–2006

The Association, in its first five years, had become soundly established, both functionally and financially. However the years to follow proved to be more challenging and difficult.

The 4th International Congress on Ambulatory Surgery was held in Geneva (Switzerland), 23rd-25th April 2001. Although the number of delegates was smaller than previously (612), this was a very successful Congress and Lindsay Roberts, Australia, became President.

The Office, which had been located in Brussels (Belgium) for six years, closed in 2001 and was relocated to the building of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, London – a process which took three years to finalize during which the secretariat operated out of ‘temporary offices’ firstly in Sydney, Australia and then Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

On 11th September, 2001 the world was ‘shaken’ by the Islamic terrorist attack on the Twin World Trade Centre towers in New York, and on the Pentagon in Washington in the U.S.A. – and the world hasn’t been the same since.

The Association’s Executive Committee was scheduled to hold a meeting in Wurzburg, Germany on 15th September, 2001 and the President, Lindsay Roberts, directed that this arrangement should proceed, notwithstanding the risks and difficulties imposed on members to attend.

The meeting was attended by seven (of a total 11) members and was very productive, although a personal tragedy was to follow. After the meeting, one of the members, Professor Mare Claude Marti from Switzerland, traveled to Egypt for a week’s holiday but suffered a major heart attack from which he did not survive – a very sad loss for his family and the Association.

The prime objectives of the Association to expand its membership and prepare standards for high quality, safe ambulatory surgery practice continued through this troubled period. A major achievement, largely due to the dedicated efforts of Gerard Parmentier (France), was the computerized recording of International Definitions of Ambulatory Surgery in 11 languages, which have been included on the Association’s website.

The 5th International Congress on Ambulatory Surgery was held in Boston (U.S.A.), 8th-12th May, 2003. This successful conference of 1336 delegates was notable for its very large trade exhibition of 198 companies. At this time, Dick de Jong, The Netherlands, became President.

Since its foundation, the International Association for Ambulatory Surgery has been registered in Brussels, Belgium, requiring that its by-laws be written (French and English languages) in strict accord with Belgian law and signed by the King. Relocation of the Association’s Office and formation of the European Union necessitated re-writing of

these by-laws, which was a complex and prolonged process for the President, Dick de Jong, assisted by several other members of the Executive.

The development of high standards of safety and quality in ambulatory surgery centers/units is a prime aim of the Association. Standards for selected aspects of ambulatory surgery had been prepared, however the subsequent publication of a book covering all aspects of ambulatory surgery practice was a most meritorious achievement

of the Association. Paulo Lemos, Portugal, was the driving force and coordinator of this project, and his efforts to complete the book “Day Surgery – Development and Practice” (2006) in 12 months were acclaimed by all.

The 6th International Congress was held in Seville (Spain), 24th-27th April, 2005. This successful conference of 1090 delegates will be long remembered for its three hour ‘Spanish lunches’ each day and the spectacular Congress dinner featuring a traditional Spanish horse show. Ugo Baccaglini (assisted by Carlo Castoro) became President.

Ambulatory surgery has continued to expand in most developed countries around the world and in some of these has reached levels that were never envisaged when the Association was founded in 1995 e.g. 80%-85% in the United States of America, 70%-75% in the United Kingdom. In many countries levels of 50%-60% have been achieved while in others the expansion has been much slower. In most countries ambulatory surgery is carried out in hospitals, some of which have dedicated units, while in others large numbers of freestanding centers have been built e.g. United States of America and Australia – both models are supported.

Education and the dissemination of information is a high priority of the Association, which has established its own website for this purpose –

([www.iaas-med.com](http://www.iaas-med.com)). The webmaster Claus Toftgaard, Denmark, has recently completed a major upgrade of the website, which will greatly facilitate the Association’s efforts in this most important activity.

The Association in collaboration with the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies has prepared a Policy Brief for the expansion of day surgery in Europe, although it would be equally applicable to any country. The project was initiated by Carlo Castoro and Ugo Baccaglini, Italy, and this excellent document entitled “Day Surgery: Making it Happen” will not only assist the expansion of day surgery, especially in those countries where this high quantity, cost effective surgical service is in its early stages of development, but will also enhance the status of the Association as a world authority on all aspects of day surgery. The Policy Brief will be launched at the 7th International Congress on Ambulatory Surgery, Amsterdam, 16th-18th April 2007.

“Ambulatory Surgery” has been the official journal of the Association for 10 years, edited by Paul Jarrett, United Kingdom, however an important change is that in future the journal will become multidisciplinary and published electronically on the Association’s website.

Membership of the Association at the end of 2006 is as follows:

**Full Members** Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America

**Associate Members** Australia, Italy

**Individual Members:** Canada, Egypt, Greece, Mexico, Peru

**Corresponding Members** India, Rumania

Council of Presidents

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