

President's Newsletter, July 2008

Dear Members:

Finally we are in July and for most of you this is the best time for sailing! But even if you were to sail the Mediterranean it would be difficult for you to meet Aphrodite!!



Sandro Botticelli (1482-1486), Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy

Hesiod in the Theogony says that at the beginning of the world there was Chaos (the word in Greek refers to a wide open mouth), and from Chaos was generated Mother Earth (Gaia in Greek), which in her turn delivered a child, Uranus. Like his mother, Uranus was large and boundless, and from him several children had been begotten. In the beginning, Mother Earth gave birth only to monsters, which were regularly killed by Uranus. Eventually, she gave birth to new generations of divine creatures, the Titans. One of these, Chronos, was particularly dear to his mother, who was getting very angry at Uranus because he would kill her sons. Using a diamond sickle, the Titan Chronos cut off the testis of his father Uranus and flung them into the water. The blood and semen caused foam to gather, which floated across the [Mediterranean] Sea to the Island of Cyprus. The contact between the semen and the sea produced the birth of Aphrodite, the goddess who "walks over the foam" (aphros "foam" and odites "who walks"). The young goddess is represented like a pearl in a conch shell and the two lovers symbols of spiritual passion, Zefiro e Clori, blow her toward the shores, while on the other side one of the Horae, goddesses of the Seasons, hands her a flowered cloak. She is the goddess of beauty, love and fertility ("Venus" for the Romans, "Astarte" for the Phenicians and "Turan" for the Etruscans).

In 1779, the Italian priest and scientist, Lazzaro Spallanzani (1729-1799) was the first to demonstrate that contact between an egg and sperm was necessary for an embryo to develop. Just a few years later, there came the first report of an artificial insemination in humans. In 1785, the Scottish surgeon, John Hunter (1728-1793) collected sperm from a patient with hypospodies and injected it into his wife's vagina with a worm syringe, resulting in a live birth. The next case of artificial insemination was not documented until 1884, and took place at the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, (USA). In the last 30 years, the development of Reproductive

Medicine was spectacular, and it occurred in parallel with the development of different related specialist Societies.

The SGI is a premier scientific organization in Obstetrics and Gynecology. The description in our web site indicates that "Areas of focus include obstetrics, perinatology, reproductive genetics, gynecology and gynecological oncology, endocrinology, reproductive physiology, biochemistry, pharmacology, immunology, epidemiology, reproductive infectious disease, stem cells and developmental biology".

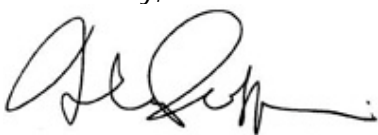
In light of that description, some considerations come out:

- 1) We must give a clear image of the SGI!! With the close support of the Communication Committee, the text describing SGI's interests is under revision. Kirk Conrad, the chair of the Committee is doing a superb job. He has begun developing a document entitled "Recommendations for the improvement of SGI web site and other ways to enhance SGI's visibility". Approved by the Executive Committee (held in Siena, Italy on June 30, 2008), the implementation of these recommendations is already occurring and you may visit a new and improved SGI web site. Some members of the Communication Committee "manage" different and new links (What's New, Kudos, and coming soon, Ask the Expert and Training Opportunities). The aim is to complete the majority of the site before the next Interim Council meeting, November 2008.
- 2) The Scientific Program of the SGI Annual Meeting needs to reflect the major areas of interest: A- obstetrics/perinatal medicine, B- gynecology/gynecologic oncology, C- reproductive medicine/endocrinology. Considering that our key word is "investigation," the invited lectures and the abstracts submitted should reflect the wide interest which we have in obstetrics and gynecology. Even though, in the last editions of the SGI Annual Meeting, there was a prevalence of obstetrics, the goal of having a certain percentage of presentations for each area of interest was pursued and the same has been done by John Challis and Sarah Berga, the Program Directors of the 2009 Edition. Regarding the Glasgow Meeting. Within the end of this month, the Scientific Preliminary Program will be on the SGI website.
- 3) The SGI has to interact with the other Specialty Societies. Last month a letter to the presidents of several Specialty Societies was sent requesting a closer interaction for shared interests and possible joint initiatives with the SGI. All have replied with enthusiasm, and some concrete proposals have already been realized: the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) invited the SGI President to the Executive Board Meeting, both the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (RCOG) and the European Society of Human Reproduction Embryology (ESHRE) will organize a mini symposium at our 2009 Annual Meeting in Glasgow. Following the contacts with the Society of Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) and the Society for the study of Reproduction (SSR) the interest to exchange symposia at each other's meetings or to organize joint special interest meetings has been reciprocally expressed. In particular, the SMFM President invited the SGI President to moderate two oral sessions dedicated to basic science at the 2009 SMFM Annual Meeting and I accepted with pleasure. The Mediterranean Society for Reproduction Medicine (MSRM) also invited the SGI to promote a symposium during their 2009 Annual Meeting. Finally, I accepted the invitation to serve on the FASEB International Issues Subcommittee. The direction is good and the wind blows fine!!

All of the objectives are directed towards the same goal: declaring our identity and cooperating with all those of goodwill who have a concern for women's health.

Again do not forget, even while you are sailing, to give 5 minutes to the SGI.

Sincerely,



Felice Petraglia
SGI President, 2008-2009