

## President's Newsletter, October 2008

Dear Members:

The present newsletter reaches you only 1 week before the deadline (October 21, 2008) for submitting abstracts for the 2009 Annual Meeting.

The mission of all members is to go to Glasgow (UK), possibly with all the troops!! Such missions have often been difficult. Even Gaius Julius Caesar, one of the most famous military and political leaders in the Ancient Rome and perhaps in all of history, was unable to conquer Scotland!



*One of the earliest printed illustrations of Caesarean section. Purportedly the birth of Julius Caesar. From Svetonius' /Lives of the Twelve Caesars/, 1506 woodcut.*

*The birth of Julius Caesar is well-known in obstetrics, and today the caesarean section is the most common surgical intervention performed throughout the world. The story is told that Gaius Julius Caesar was cut from the womb of his mother, who had died during childbirth. Two major biographies of Caesar, by Plutarch and Suetonius, do not report any details on his birth. Consequently, the circumstances of the emperor's birth are wrapped in darkness, so that we can neither confirm nor disavow the rumours about his birth. Nevertheless, there are other possible explanations for the origins of this tradition.*

*In Roman culture "the signs" appearing at the moment of birth were used to predict the destiny of the newborn. A child, who survived a cut in order to be removed from the womb, could have a great destiny. Such a miraculous birth could make Caesar truly a god. Indeed, in his "Natural History," Pliny the Elder in speaking about the "signs" which accompany the child's birth wrote, "The first of those to bear the surname of Caesar was so named because his mother's belly had been "cut" (caesus in Latin)". This said, even though it was known that his mother, Aurelia, had not died in childbirth and had survived in fact until her famous son was more than fifty years old. Pliny intended to explain the origin of the family surname. According to him, it had been introduced into the family by an unknown ancestor who had come into life though the cut belly of his mother. However, since antiquity, the more convenient legend said that Julius Caesar was born by a section spread.*

Therefore, the ancient Roman caesarean section was performed to remove a baby from the womb of a mother who died during childbirth (also known as *lex caesarean*). The babies born by caesarean section were also indicated as *non natus* ("not born") because they did not receive the maternal inheritance (only the paternal). Indeed, the Spanish Saint Raymond Non-natus (1204) received his surname because he was born by a caesarean section done on his dead mother, who had died while giving birth to him.

The first person to use the expression "caesarean cut" for the removal of a live baby from its deceased mother was a French doctor of the Renaissance, François Rousset, in a work published in 1581 (*Traitté nouveau de l'hysterotomotokie, ou enfentement caesariere*). The extraction of a baby from a living mother was first described by Bernard de Gordon (1305 *Lilium Medicinae*) and by Guy de Chauliac (1363, *Chirurgie*). In German, Dutch, Japanese, and Korean the caesarean section is termed "emperor section (or incision)" which still confirms the link with roman Emperors (Caesars).

The classical caesarean section involves a midline incision, even though the lower uterine segment is the most commonly used procedure. The Caesarean Section (CS) is increasingly used in the Western Countries, and the debate is, what is the correct ratio between the CS and the vaginal delivery in our society?

Anyway, we ought to conquer Glasgow trying to be as thrifty as possible (this is a classic good virtue for Scotland!!)

You can reach Glasgow by flying into three different airports:

Glasgow International Airport: <http://www.glasgowairport.com>

Prestwick Airport: <http://www.qpia.co.uk/airportinfo/howto/links.asp>

Edinburgh Airport: <http://www.edinburghairport.com>

For hotel accommodations: <https://www.conferencebookings.co.uk/delegate/GMBSGI2009>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Felice Petraglia', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Felice Petraglia, M.D.  
SGI President 2008-2009