



NYSGE: An Historical Perspective

The New York Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy was conceptualized by Richard McCray and Howard J. (Jim) Eddy in 1973 at a time when colonoscopy had just been developed (1970) for wide clinical application several years following the introduction of fiberoptic endoscopes (1960's). It was clear that gastroenterology was about to undergo a major change with a broad range of new fiberoptic instruments to be imminently put into the hands of clinicians.

In 1973 Dick invited a group of New York colleagues to have monthly meetings at the Yale club to interchange experience and learn from each other. This group consisted of Jim Eddy, Jerry Waye, Hiromi Shinya, Sid Winawer, Paul Sherlock, Henry Colcher, and David Zimmon. After several lively discussions over dinner, the group envisioned the need for a society that would provide the means for educating the GI community in the application of the new technology that was already upon us and the newer instruments that would inevitably be developed.

An informal meeting was arranged in 1974 at Dick's apartment to which other gastroenterologists in the greater New York area were invited including Jerry Siegel, Victor Groisser, and Charlie Flood. It was at this meeting that the NYSGE was officially founded with Dick as its first president, Paul Sherlock as vice president, and Sid Winawer as secretary/treasurer. Sid asked Florence Lefcourt, his then MSKCC GI Service administrative secretary to help him organize the society and run the day-to-day logistics.

The main goal set forth by NYSGE was education. The first post-graduate one-day course held in the same year (1974) at Memorial Hospital was "A Day in the Colon," a tongue-in-cheek reference to the time spent doing a single colonoscopy as well as referring to the one-day course. The following year "A Night in the Cecum" was the sequel, reflecting our poor knowledge of cecal intubation and landmarks. Since then the course has been given every year, has grown to several days, hundreds of attendees and many exhibitors, truly a "mini-DDW". It is now the largest GI endoscopy course in the country after the national ASGE course.

In addition to this major course, other educational activities have been added including a lecture at the Annual Dinner meeting, a summer fellows course managed by Jean Saleh, frequent case presentation meetings, scientific symposia, and the introduction by Ellen Scherl of the Fellows Intracity Rounds.

NYSGE also has been actively involved with local and national research, health and legislative initiatives, including the New York City campaign on colorectal cancer with the Department of Health coalition. Many NYSGE members have served nationally and internationally with great distinction and have received many awards including the Schindler Award and the Distinguished Educator Award. Executive Director Florence Lefcourt has been honored several times.

NYSGE has grown stronger over the years, becoming a model society with a high national and international profile. It is an invaluable asset to gastroenterologists in the greater New York area, setting a standard of excellence in GI education, training, and research.

Contributors: Richard McCray, MD and Sidney Winawer, MD, August 31, 2007