

# APLA Medical Negligence Conference

By Catherine Cheek



*The Canberra contingent – APLA ACT Director John Little, Charmaine Tunn, and APLA ACT President Mark Blumer.*



*Delegates Kevin Wong and Sukhwant Singh of Perth pictured with APLA CEO Eva Scheerlinck at the conference dinner.*



*Michael King, of Adelaide, and Bill Cortese, of Sydney, catch up during a session break.*

As the reforms and controversy surrounding medical negligence litigation continue to make practising in this field of personal injury law more complicated and difficult, the APLA Medical Negligence Conference is an increasingly important forum for sharing information among lawyers in the specialty, and learning about the medicine behind negligence cases.

This sixth conference was held at the Swissotel in Sydney on 29 and 30 July 2004, with 53 delegates in attendance. Many of the speakers were from the medical profession. The day included excellent papers from infectious diseases expert Dr Ashley Watson; Dr Martin Kluckow on prematurity; Dr Stephen Allmart; and Dr John Raftos, expert in emergency medicine. Medical topics covered included diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer and ovarian cancer, an analysis of the Preslyn decision, treatment of premature babies, difficulties in controlling infection in Australian hospitals, and Care and Emergency departments.

These papers highlighted common problems arising in medical treatment and flagged issues for plaintiff lawyers in assessing cases.

As well as the array of medical expertise, stimulating papers were presented by experienced plaintiff lawyers. They included David Hirsch, Sascha Shearman, Anthony Cheshire, Christopher Hodgekiss and Miiko Kumar. David Hirsch convinced us that the plaintiffs are going to win in the wrongful life cases when they come before the High Court, and Sascha Shearman gave disturbing information about

treatment at Camberwell and Camden hospitals. Anthony Cheshire, whom I have no doubt we will hear more from in the future, gave an excellent analysis of the Preslyn decision and the steps the NSW Government has taken to prevent such a decision being made again.

Christopher Hodgekiss and Miiko Kumar together informed us about the impact of the highly contentious Ipp Report reforms on the *Tiade Practices Act*. Interactive discussions were led by Cathy Henry, Bill Madden and myself on privacy, confidentiality and informed consent.

Highlight of the conference dinner was motivational speaker, John Lane-Smith. Mr Lane-Smith presents seminars on emotional intelligence and gave delegates good reason for not scowling at staff members.

Thanks to Evidex and Unisearch for their sponsorship of the conference. Ipac Securities was the single exhibitor and Suzie Welling and Associates the advertiser.

The conference was a great success educationally and socially. Organising committee for this year were conference manager, Kim Alderson, Catherine Cheek, Karen Chan, Bill Madden and Alex Watson. ■

**Catherine Cheek** was chair of the 2004 Medical Negligence Conference.