



THYROID FLYER

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Feature – Autoimmunity & Related Conditions

Editorial

By Christopher McDermott

Welcome to our first Thyroid flyer issue for 2006.

The feature of this issue are the various autoimmune conditions. Some people with thyroid conditions also develop other autoimmune disorders. So we thought it an opportunity to provide some information on just some of those other autoimmune conditions.

The first few months of this year has been an eventful time within Thyroid Australia. If you have glanced to the top of this editorial you will note that I have taken up the reins as Editor from Alun Stevens, who is taking some time out. I have also taken some of the other Presidential duties – particularly with the committee of management – until our next Annual General Meeting at the end of this year. Alun has been President – as well as Treasurer and Company Secretary – for almost two years – as well as being the “webmaster” for Thyroid Australia since its inception. Most of you reading this would have visited our comprehensive website. Indeed, for many of you, your first contact with us was probably through our website.

I am pleased that Alun will continue to manage the website. I would like to thank him – on behalf of you all for the work he has contributed – and will continue to contribute - to the organisation. Alun's reason for taking time out is good news rather than bad; his company has become so successful that he must devote more and more of this spare time to his business interests. I wish him continuing success.

The other departure from Thyroid Australia which I must unfortunately announce is that of Robyn Koumourou. I first met Robyn at the official launch of Thyroid Australia at Melbourne Zoo back in 1999.

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Overview: Autoimmune Disorders

From time to time, physicians have recognized situations in which diseases occur together more often than chance alone would allow. In 1926, M. B. Schmidt, a physician in Germany, described two patients in whom both the adrenal and thyroid glands had failed. Since then, more than 125 patients with both disorders have been described, enough to make us realize that something more than an "accident of nature" makes this rare combination happen.

In several places on this website www.allthyroid.org we have commented on the relationship between Graves' disease and Hashimoto's disease, which tend to occur in the same families, sometimes in the same patients, and which seem to be different presentations of a single disease process.

There are other conditions that tend to occur in patients with Graves' disease and Hashimoto's disease and in their relatives as well. Some, like the prominent eyes of Graves' disease known as exophthalmos, have been well-studied and their relationship to thyroid problems carefully examined. Others, such as some of the associated skin disorders, are less well understood in regard to their relationship to the thyroid.

These articles are not about those bodily changes that occur due to high or low thyroid hormone levels. High hormone levels, for example, can raise your upper eyelids, make your skin soft and smooth, and cause your hair to become fine and delicate. The high hormone levels do not, however, cause your eyes to protrude, make the white patches of vitiligo appear on your skin, or produce the patchy baldness we call *alopecia areata*.

The latter problems are diseases in their own right. These are not, in general, serious problems about which thyroid patients should be concerned. Many, like *alopecia areata*, are not helped much by treatment, and tend to go away after a period of time. Others, like pernicious anemia or vitiligo, can be cured or controlled by appropriate treatment. Some, like Addison's disease, are so uncommon that even thyroid specialists rarely see a patient with this condition. Nevertheless, we believe there should be a place on this website www.allthyroid.org to which patients with Graves' disease or Hashimoto's disease can refer if they discover that they or one of their relatives has one of these problems.

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Volunteer News

The Thyroid Australia Board: We are currently wanting to expand the Thyroid Australia Committee and Board of Directors. If you have a passion for helping those with thyroid conditions and have some time to give, please contact the T.A. office on 9888 2588.

Your Story: If you have a story to tell and would like to share your personal experiences with thyroid disease, and/or related conditions, please send in your story to Thyroid Australia, via email or mail. We are always looking for member's stories to include in future editions of the *Thyroid Flyer*.



THYROID AUSTRALIA

MEMBER BENEFITS

Full access to Thyroid Flyer is restricted to paid up members of Thyroid Australia.

Thyroid Australia's services are funded by membership fees and donations from individual member of the public.

Membership is not expensive and your money goes towards the cost of maintaining and hosting this site, staffing our office, producing our newsletter and researching thyroid problem an treatments.

Please visit the About Us section of our web site for details on how you can join Thyroid Australia and help us help others just like you.