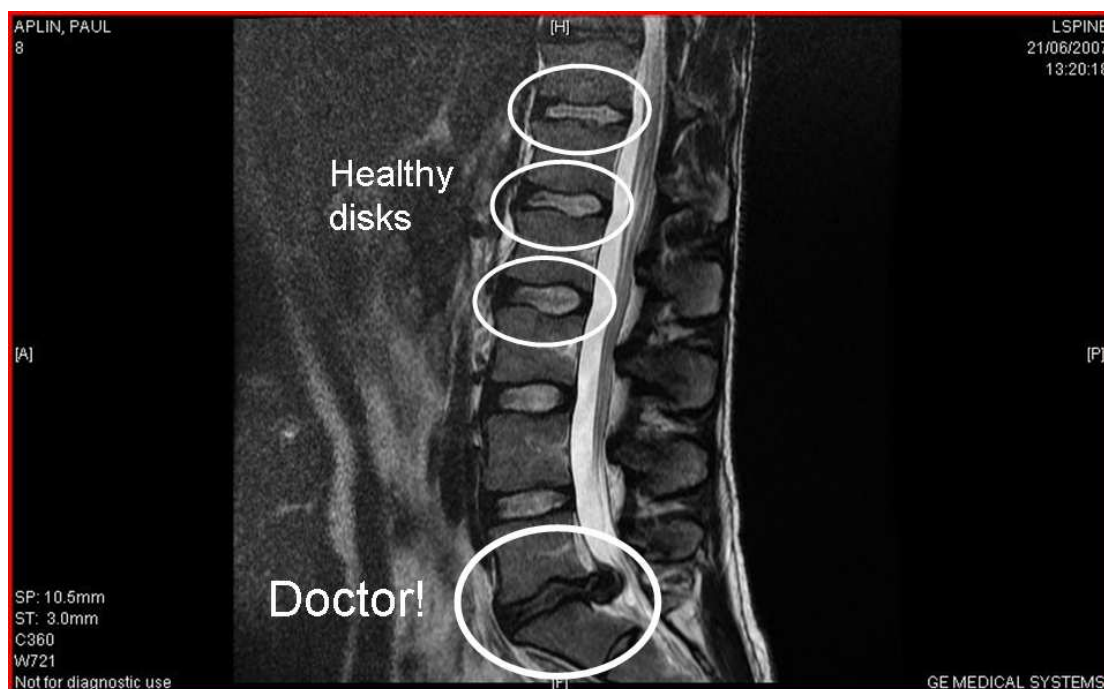


## Chairman's Message

### *Glad to see the back of ubiquitous imagery!*

I don't mean to express disappointment at the widespread availability of spatial data; far from it. I do, though, have a small and very personal example of how imagery influences everyday life and informs our decision making. My summer was a disaster! The cause – a back complaint. After years of aches and strains (sofa slump and football games), I often suspected a major injury was round the corner. From January, my worst fears were gradually realised. A sore back and anti-inflammatories soon gave way to GPs, physios, spinal consultants; samples, exercises, tests; while knowing friends and colleagues frowned, winced and whispered 'avoid surgery'. After six months of treatment and wildly varying advice, I was thoroughly confused about what to do next. Then came the MRI scan. Although warned repeatedly that scan results tended to be ambiguous, and that second (and third, and fourth...) opinions were often sensible, my image (see below) made things very, very clear. I'm delighted to say that two months after my discectomy, I'm well on the road to recovery (and I'm privately pleased that imagery played a decisive role). The doctors even think a return to football is possible...



That's enough for now about the ubiquitous nature of imagery in today's society. After presenting this image, I should perhaps move on to discuss copyright! Maybe, next time...

The image shown above may be familiar to the 50 or so RSPSoc members who attended our AGM in Newcastle recently, where it featured in my inaugural Chairman's address. The AGM proceeded smoothly enough, despite one tricky financial question (later proving to be a red herring) that had the outgoing chairman, Dr Stuart Marsh, jokingly offering his resignation only moments before his term of office was due to come to an end anyway. The Society owes a great debt of thanks to Stuart for his energetic leadership over the last three years, which has seen significant progress in his three strategic areas: strengthening the annual conference series, expanding external affairs and enhancing member benefits. My aim now is to build on his success, further increasing the level of professionalism with which Society business is conducted and recapturing the enthusiasm and involvement of members across all forms of RSPSoc activity.

The AGM took place during this year's Annual Conference, hosted impressively by Prof Jon Mills, Dr Meredith Williams and their extensive team at the University of

Newcastle. Congratulations and thanks to all on arranging a truly excellent event, featuring a strong scientific programme, a more than convivial social programme and record delegate numbers. For further details on the conference, please see Eirini Politi's report. I would, though, just like to congratulate Dr Jon Finch, the long-time RSPSoc Hon. Gen. Sec. on receiving the Society's Founders Award at the Annual Dinner in St James' Park. Jon was, conveniently, a key founding member of the Society, and worked tirelessly both before and after the merger to keep RSPSoc on a steady course.

### ***What do you think?***

Now, the future, and a few questions for you, the members:

1. I personally enjoyed the Newcastle conference immensely, and I would like to experience this spirit of conviviality more often. A few years ago, RSPSoc held a mid-term (midway between AGMs/Annual Conferences) social gathering, the *Conversazione*, at the Globe Theatre in London. **Are you interested in such an event again, perhaps as an annual feature?** To make this even more worthwhile, an *Annual Lecture* could perhaps be established, taking place immediately before the *Conversazione*.

2. The Society benefits from the very great efforts of Prof Paul Mather and his team in preparing a quarterly Newsletter, a thankless task and often frustrating due to the relatively few articles received. I hope to stimulate more contributions by initiating regular sections and using available material more effectively. For instance, in the next Newsletter I propose to commission *Member Profiles*, *Committee* and *SIG Reports*, and establish a *Members Comments* section, listing all the communications I and others receive (anonymously where necessary). **What other Newsletter features would you like to see?**

3. At the same time, I plan to review the format and delivery of the Newsletter. At Chairman's half hour in Newcastle, most members agreed the Newsletter could benefit from a more *modern appearance*, but it was interesting to note that many members wished to continue receiving the Newsletter in *hardcopy form*. **Would you prefer the Newsletter in hardcopy or digital form, if at all?**

4. I held various discussions with student members in Newcastle, notably a lengthy debrief with outgoing student representative, Rachel Gaulton. There is clearly much interest and activity from RSPSoc's student community, but this isn't always translated into action. We discussed the possibility of establishing a *Student Liaison* post on Council to assist the student representatives on a regular basis (more regular than the quarterly Council meetings anyway!). We also discussed establishing a regular *Student Forum* at the Annual Conference. **What other students activities would you like?**

### ***Send your comments***

I have many more questions, but these are probably enough for now. Please do send in any comments or suggestions you have. These will be well received, taken seriously and may well influence the future development of the Society. You can add to this debate on the RSPSoc website's Discussion Forum – <http://www.rspsoc.org/discussion-forum/viewthread/43/> – or email [rspsoc@rspsoc.org](mailto:rspsoc@rspsoc.org).

Finally, I am delighted and honoured, though perhaps a little apprehensive, to serve the Society and its members as Chairman for the next three years. I look forward to the challenges you set.

*Paul Aplin*