REPORT

BATLS Course - 9 January 1997

Lt S Potter
BSc(Hons), MB, ChB, RAMC

Dept of Orthopaedic and Trauma Surgery, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh

A seven hundred mile round trip from Scotland was the opening obstacle to my getting to my BATLS course in Chester. All the effort, though, was proved to be resoundingly worthwhile.

In the whole of my undergraduate studies, these two days have made the biggest impact on my career so far and have imparted information to me that I use almost daily.

The course itself brought together a mix of people from consultants to theatre technicians in a friendly, competitive but enjoyable learning arena. Professional barriers were soon dismantled (with humility from all sides) as we all began to realise our ignorance while soaking up the intellectual repartee from our skilled 'theatrical' tutors.

Otherwise boring theoretical lectures were spiced up with satire and innuendo, and intermixed with the odd glass or ten of 'haemorrhagic' wine. We learned how to intubate, to cut down, perform a cricothyrotomy, and the

painful art of the jaw thrust. We all rehearsed our ABCs (and our P and Qs when we forgot to use the 'Holy Grail').

The lack of cerebral dehydration on the day of the exams made you realise that this course was something special - everyone wanted to do well in their practical and written exams. Except for one or two candidates we all managed to get our 'BATLS honours'.

If I was asked was it worth it, I would say miss this to your own detriment. The course provides you with a lifelong foundation stone on which to base all your acute medicine and surgery. In fact, on many a night this bleary eyed houseman has had cause to use his ABCs learnt in Chester that weekend. The only problem, Sir, is can I do it again?

N.B. BATLS/ATLS like courses are now being introduced to undergraduate curriculae at British Medical Schools.