

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I am honoured to have been asked to put my name forward for possible election to the Management Committee of the ILAE for the period 2021-25. I have been involved with the ILAE, both with the local chapter in Australia (Epilepsy Society of Australia) and with various Commissions and Task Forces for 30 years. I believe I have a good understanding of the needs of people with epilepsy, and those caring for them around the world, appreciating the strengths and weaknesses of different health care environments, and of the large spectrum of socio-economic circumstances.

I had previously been approached to be involved at the upper levels of the ILAE but, living in Australia made the necessary attendance at numerous meetings impractical. Now, in the post-COVID situation, much of the work will be done by teleconference and, if anything, being in Australia is an advantage as the ILAE work falls outside times for my usual obligations. Thus, I believe I can devote a considerable amount of time and energy to serving the League. Further, through my leadership in multi-site international collaborations in research, I believe I have gained a reputation as a facilitator of cooperation and collaborative endeavours. I hope I can utilize that experience more broadly in the work of the League.

Priorities for me include:

1. Education: The growth in knowledge in epilepsy is enormous. We need an effective way of communicating well curated information to membership. I also am a passionate believer in educating regarding research methodology. Many of us engage in research but most are not formally trained in this and this is something that I want to try and improve.
2. Diversity and inclusion: Epilepsy is non-discriminatory in terms of who it affects and this should be reflected in the epilepsy workforce at a local level but also at an international level. We need to encourage leaders to step forward from less well represented sectors of the global community, and train talented young members from diverse backgrounds to be leaders
3. Supporting Chapters at a local level: The needs of various Chapters vary enormously. Effective programs must be tailored to the local situation and the Management Committee needs to listen and act based on local needs.
4. Congresses: These remain a vital part of the impact of the League in terms of dissemination of knowledge, building of camaraderie and effective global action. It is clear, however, that they need to change in terms of the short and intermediate term challenges to travel and the ongoing issue of affordability, particularly for colleagues from low income countries.
5. Public Visibility: The profile of epilepsy in terms of importance and the fight against stigmatization has improved, but has not improved enough. Endeavours in this regard should be an essential mission of the League, together with the IBE and WHO.

Thank you for considering my candidature,

Sam Berkovic