

EDITORIAL

President's Column

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Congrats to Sandy and her Organizing Committee for a superb Annual Meeting and to all the participants who made the meeting a huge success. And so another year begins....

One of the key initiatives Charley had asked me to undertake last year was to develop a renewed strategic plan for ASHI. Results of this process were highlighted at this year's Annual Meeting and it is this topic that I would like to share with the broader membership. First, to those on the strategic planning task force who came ready to be engaged, and who captured the vision and pushed to find consensus—you have my deepest gratitude. By way of background, this group, by design, was comprised of people from the membership-at-large to bring fresh eyes to the issues at hand. The process included a survey of the leadership and membership followed by a face-to-face meeting in February 2005 in San Diego. Out of this process we identified six key areas/themes that we felt were critical to achieve during the next 3-5 years if ASHI is to thrive as a society. They were:

- To engage in community and consensus building.
- To be a primary resource for educational products and programs in immunogenetics.
- To see post-transplant monitoring brought into practice.
- To increase and diversify membership.
- To be a primary resource for maintaining and improving clinical lab practice in immunogenetics.
- To continue to bring innovation to the field of immunogenetics.

So how do we achieve these goals? I do not have space to go into all of the ideas and strategies put forward but what follows is a brief outline of some of the initiatives already underway to address three of these goals.

To Engage in Community and Consensus Building

Communicate, communicate, communicate, and then communicate again. A key mandate the ASHI board has set for itself is to communicate what is happening as much as possible. For example, in the *Quarterly*, we will have a column titled "Meet the Division," wherein the division heads will highlight the key initiatives they are undertaking. This column will be separate from the publication of the board meeting minutes in the *Quarterly*.

Developing strong links with sister societies, clinical societies and clinical programs (UNOS, NMDP, HRSA) is a key strategy. The Immunogenetics Summer School is a prime example where ASEATTA, EFI and ASHI are collaborating. We need to look for other areas where these societies can work closer together. Recently, the Global Alliance for Transplantation (GAT), an initiative of the Transplantation Society, invited us to participate on their advisory board. Their stated mission is "To advance the safe, effective, and ethical practice of transplantation for all patients in need." Our opportunity in this regard is to contribute to the development of global best-practice guidelines and promote educational resources in immunogenetics and histocompatibility. What the success of the GAT will be is as yet unclear, but we are pleased

that Ron Kerman represented us at the GAT's November meeting in Philadelphia.

To help ensure success in this priority area, the board has approved the development of an External Affairs division that will oversee some of these initiatives. Karen Nelson, as President-elect, will oversee this division, which is co-chaired by our VP of Operations, Harriet Noreen.

To be a Primary Resource for Educational Products and Programs in Immunogenetics

There are a number of excellent products that we already have (e.g. Annual Meeting, Regionals, Immunogenetics Summer School, *Human Immunology*, etc.). One of the new concepts that we are in the process of turning into reality is "ASHI University." This is to be a Web-based continuing education tool that is envisioned as a resource that can reach out not only to our own membership but to the global immunogenetics community. It is also intended to meet the needs of the clinical programs that our members interact with (e.g. clinical trainees, clinical coordinators, etc.). The board sees ASHI U as not only advancing this goal but also serving as a mechanism to address our goal of increasing and diversifying membership.

Dean Sylvania, Kathryn Tinckam, Pat Adams, Leena Desai, and Nancy Higgins are taking the leadership in developing the first ASHI U stream, titled "Standardized Technologists Training Curriculum (STTC)." They are being supported by the Education, Web and Technologists' Affairs Committees. Many of our membership at the Annual Meeting expressed great interest in ASHI U and asked how they can contribute to its success. Please contact Dean if you would like to be part of helping develop this program.

To be a Primary Resource for Maintaining and Improving Clinical Lab Practice in Immunogenetics

ASHI is committed to continuous improvement in our Accreditation, PT and Directors' Training Review programs. Moreover, the Publications Committee is committed to overseeing renewal of the Procedure Manual on an annual basis so all procedures are reviewed and updated every five years. On display this year at the Annual Meeting were the new procedures that have been produced and will be available shortly. Our goal will be to develop "best-practice" guidelines as well as to help further standardize techniques for members.

In closing, these are but a few of the initiatives taking place this year. What is clear is that as of yet, we do not have all the answers. Rather, at the Annual Meeting, the board charged our various committees with developing creative and innovative suggestions as to how they can contribute to ASHI's success in these six dimensions. Moreover, I would challenge you as members to come up with your own suggestions and forward these to the appropriate committee, or more importantly, to consider joining that committee to help us achieve the vision that we have set for ASHI.