

President's Column

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As my term comes to an end, I want to share with you my reflections on “service,” and what it means to a society such as ours. My first observation is how committed the ASHI membership is to acts of service. While we have a dedicated management group that is exceptional and provides the key operational infrastructure for ASHI, it is the members who serve on our boards and committees that ensure our Society moves forward. It is not an exaggeration to say it is this level of service that reflects the health of a society. In this regard, I am very pleased with the health of our Society and my deepest gratitude goes to those of you who have given of yourselves to ensure ASHI achieves its goals.

My second observation comes from addressing the question “Who do we serve?” It is clear from the aforementioned that the Executive, the Board, the Committees serve the membership in achieving ASHI's goals. The larger question is “Who do ASHI members serve?” During the last two years this has been a guiding question for me as one of the ASHI leaders, for it is by answering this question that we can achieve clarity of purpose and focus on where ASHI needs to invest its resources – financial, but more importantly, its volunteer capital.

So who do we serve? Perhaps I am biased by my clinician training, but at the root of it all I see us as serving the patient to ensure the best outcome possible. Indeed, our website is very clear in declaring “The patient comes first...” So what does this mean for us? How do we achieve this mission?

At our foundation must be high-quality basic research in immunogenetics and histocompatibility. In this regard, we must ensure that we continue to attract basic researchers to our society both at the trainee and PI levels. As we have matured as a society, this is an area that requires vigilance as it has been difficult to keep basic scientists engaged. With the advent of the current technological revolution, which is looking for clinical application, we have an opportunity to re-engage the basic scientists and must seek to do so. One mechanism is to ensure that the annual meeting highlights advances in basic research. This hopefully will stimulate ideas among the membership and lead to innovative collaborations. Another will be to provide opportunities for basic science trainees to conduct research. Indeed, it is going to be critical to train our replacements if we are to ensure the long-term viability of our field. This is a challenge that we must address now.

At the bedside, how do we make certain the best outcome possible is achieved for the patient? At its root, we must ensure high-quality consultation to our clinical colleagues. How can ASHI advance this mission? In essence, the answer reflects the pillars of our society – Education,

Quality Assurance, Proficiency Testing, and Research. In each of these areas we must seek to provide, and demand, the highest quality product – you the members are the key to ensure that this goal is realized. The challenge for us all in the coming years is that this goal demands change. As I spoke about in my last address, it is this change that we must, as a community, embrace. We must be the leaders in promoting its adoption both by our members and by our clinical colleagues.

A few of the key strategies we have been pursuing this year to facilitate our mission are:

- Development of ASHI-U as a web-based educational tool
- Restructuring of the ASHI website to make it a go-to place for members
- Redesigning the PT program to make it more informative for the members
- Standardizing the Regional Workshops to highlight some of the key changes we are going to have to implement
- Updating and generating new protocols for the ASHI manual
- Establishing “Team ASHI” as a key partner society of the HRSA Transplantation Collaborative
- Creating the External Affairs Committee to build relationships outside of ourselves

What should be clear is that this level of effort takes more than just that of the ASHI Executive Committee. All of the committee and board members have picked up the challenge this last year and are pulling together to move our society forward.

So who are we serving? We are serving the patient by first ensuring ASHI serves its membership and in turn by having its members provide high-quality consultation to our clinical colleagues. Our ongoing challenge will be to maintain and exceed this level of service both to our members and our colleagues into the future. Our success will be measured by our service.