

President's Column

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We welcome 2008 and with it many changes within ASHI, and in the wider scientific and transplant communities.

As you all know, Kim Glenn, who has served as ASHI's very energetic executive director, has moved on to a new assignment with Association Headquarters Inc. (AH), our management company. You have our thanks, Kim, for a job well done and our congratulations and best wishes in your new position.

Kim's successor as executive director is Sam Albrecht, a long-time member of the AH staff, with Kathy Miranda as assistant executive director. I have every confidence in ASHI's new management team and look forward to a great year.

The ASHI Annual Meeting, which took place October 8-12 in Minneapolis, was a success on all levels. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Plans for the 2008 meeting in Toronto, set for October 27-31, are well underway. A highlight of this meeting will be a joint ASHI/AABB symposium on TRALI. Mark your calendars and make sure you have a valid passport in time for the meeting.

The International Workshop and International Summer School on Immunogenetics are being organized for September 2008 in Brazil. The purpose of the Workshop is to provide a venue for a discussion of histocompatibility topics for an international audience. Participants are also given an opportunity to present their own research.

The 2008 Regional meetings will be held in Las Vegas, Indianapolis and Atlanta. See the website for information and registration for these meetings. There will be plenty of exciting choices for meetings in 2008. Plan to be there!

Your society is moving forward on a number of priority projects identified at the June 2007 Board of Directors meeting.

- The ASHI University site was launched in October and many of you have already taken advantage of this valuable resource.
- The proficiency testing program is undergoing a complete transition, from the committee structure, to the review and grading process, to the subscription and reporting. An RFP for a new vendor was circulated in the fall of 2007 and the vendor will be identified in early 2008. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Rene Duquesnoy and to Marilyn Marrari for their years of dedicated service and excellence in supplying the HLA proficiency surveys for ASHI labs. We may experience a few growing pains in the next year, but I feel that the end result will be worth the effort.

- Portions of the ASHI website project are online and live including the new, user friendly proficiency testing program subscription order site. Labs can now log on to the site, obtain information about the surveys, order the surveys needed, complete the purchase and track the progress of their orders.
- Plans for the joint Transplantation Histocompatibility Conference co-sponsored by ASHI, UNOS, the Transplant societies (AST, ASTS, ISHLT), the NIH and the DOT, are being finalized. The goals of the conference are to discuss the currently available data on the correlation of HLA antibodies detected by solid phase methods with success or failure in transplantation, and to identify additional data needed to reach consensus on the clinical relevance of HLA antibodies.
- ASHI is co-sponsoring a satellite symposium at the FOCIS meeting scheduled in June 2008. The focus will be on Immune Monitoring in Transplantation. Information about the FOCIS meeting may be found on the ASHI website.
- The ASHI Directors' Affairs Committee is forming a new Director-in-Training support group coordinated by Dr. Paul Warner. The goals of the group are to encourage communication and dialogue among Directors-in-training and to provide a conduit for information from the Director Training and Review Committee about requirements for approval as ASHI lab directors, advice about developing portfolios, changes in standards and regulations, and preparation for the ABHI director exam. If you are a Director-in-Training or have recently hired someone as a Director-in-Training, contact Paul Warner at pwarner@psbc.org to join the group.

As a reminder to all ASHI/UNOS labs, the UNOS CPRA implementation time line has important implications for your laboratories and also for your affiliated transplant programs. Are you ready for CPRA?

CPRA, or calculated PRA, is the frequency of donors that have unacceptable HLA antigens for any given recipient based on the HLA specificities detected by the laboratory. CPRA is not a "virtual crossmatch." Instead, it is intended to eliminate from the match runs potential recipients who would be predicted to have positive crossmatches. CPRA will replace the traditional PRA in the national kidney allocation scheme in the coming months. If your laboratory is performing recipient testing for solid organ transplant, especially kidney and pancreas, make sure you have the following in place:

- Use of at least one solid phase immunoassay in determining recipient antibody specificity.
- Agreement with your transplant physicians and surgeons

to determine what will constitute an “unacceptable antigen” that will be a contraindication to transplant.

- Criteria acceptable to the lab and the transplant program in place for unacceptable antigens. For example, a lab may set criteria according to levels of antibody reactivity, using mean fluorescence intensity level, which will correspond to a positive crossmatch by the method used in the laboratory. Alternatively, criteria may be based on more stringent requirements of the transplant center clinical staff.
- Implementation of the criteria and policy for listing unacceptables in UNet.

UNet CPRA implementation is planned to occur in three phases:

Phase 1: Allocation will still be based on traditional PRA, and the CPRA will be listed on the match run for comparison. A CPRA calculator will be available on the Transplant Living website. Duration of 3-6 months depending on programming.

Phase 2: Allocation will be based on CPRA. Traditional PRAs will be available for comparison. Date TBA.

Phase 3: Allocation will be based on CPRA and the traditional PRAs will disappear from the wait list and the match run. Date TBA.

Throughout the implementation period, a joint committee comprised of members of the UNOS Histocompatibility, Kidney and Pancreas Transplant committees will monitor CPRAs, traditional PRAs and incidence of unexpected

crossmatches. The joint committee has been charged with identifying and investigating all issues surrounding CPRA and recommending corrective actions to the OPTN/UNOS Board of Directors.

The CPRA implementation by the HLA laboratories will be an important piece of the new national kidney allocation algorithm.

There will be many changes in our field in the coming months within ASHI, in our sister transplant societies and in the transplant community as a whole. We will inform you of as many of these as possible via blast e-mail or on the ASHI website. Stay tuned and stay informed.

Are you still searching for that New Year’s Resolution? It is not too late to become an ASHI member, or to participate by taking an ASHI-U course (and taking the test), or to submit an abstract to our Journal or Annual Meeting, or to join a committee and, most importantly, to let us know what issues are impacting your laboratory.

I wish each of you a Happy New Year and good health, happiness and success in the coming year!