

President's Column

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In the months since the Annual Meeting, significant progress has been made on several of the initiatives that were identified as priorities for this year. I will summarize those activities below.

Transplantation Histocompatibility Conference Update

A Transplantation Histocompatibility Conference was held March 2-4, 2008, in Chicago at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel. The meeting had financial and participatory support from ASHI, AST, ASTS, ISHLT, NIH and UNOS.

Each of these organizations submitted names of individuals to be their representatives at the conference, and were the conference participants, including: renal, pancreas, heart and lung physicians and surgeons from adult and pediatric programs, histocompatibility specialists and NIH representatives. A steering committee was formed to help develop the format and organize the meeting.

ASHI opened a discussion on the ASHI Forum on our web site to give ASHI members an opportunity to present thoughts and views for our representatives to bring to the conference.

The meeting dealt with the clinical relevance of the new trans-

Meeting Participants

Nicholas Banner	Stanley Jordan	Lorraine Racusen
Mark Barr	Ronald Kerman*#	Lloyd Ratner
Robert Bray	Jon Kobashigawa	Elaine Reed
Nancy Bridges	Susie Leffell*	Nancy Reinsmoen
Patricia Campbell	Francesca Macchiarini	Bruce Rosengard
Charles Canter	Joren Madsen	Ron Shapiro
Michael Cecka*	Arthur Matas*	Peter Stastny
Frank Christiansen	Mandeep Mehra	Peter Stock
Franz Claas	Robert Montgomery	Anat Tambur#
Gabriel Danovitch*	Karen Nelson*#	Kathryn Tinkam
Duane Davis	Peter Nickerson*#	Steven Webber*
Robert Ettenger	Jonah Odum*	Lori West*
Gregory Fant	Carol Pancoska#	Winfred Williams
Sandy Feng	Steven Paraskevas	Andrea Zachary
Robert Gaston	Ronald Pelletier	Adriana Zeevi
James Gloor	Mark Pescovitz	(*Steering Committee,
William Harmon	Richard Pierson	# ASHI members)

plant immunology lab technologies, such as identification of HLA and non-HLA antibodies, and crossmatch results and their clinical significance. In addition, the meeting addressed how to best understand patient immunological risk and how desensitizing protocols can be applied to various patient risk categories.

Transplantation Histocompatibility Conference Discussion Questions

1. How do we tissue type and what clinically useful information is obtained?
2. How do we identify HLA antigens or non-HLA antigens?
3. Can we quantitate the amount of antibody in a clinically meaningful way?
4. What crossmatch procedures are used and what are their sensitivities and specificities?
5. What is the clinical correlation between information about crossmatch results and the presence of antibody (HLA/non-HLA)?
6. What test information is needed to assess the immunologic risk status of a patient?
7. What is the virtual crossmatch? Is it beneficial for hearts, lungs, kidneys, pancreas, local or distant donor considerations?
8. What are the clinical choices to be made in the presence or absence of antibody (HLA/non-HLA) and a positive or negative crossmatch?
9. Can you transplant across a donor specific antibody and if so, how?
10. What are the protocols for desensitization before/after transplant for adults/kids?
11. What are the differences in these desensitizing protocols and which patient risk groups do they apply to or not?
12. What is the difference in the above considerations when transplant centers use different menus for immunosuppression?
13. What tests can be used for post-Tx monitoring? What is the resulting information? Also, what questions should we be asking?

A summary report of the proceedings was prepared by the steering committee and will be made public by presentations at medical and scientific meetings as well as by submission of the summary report to the appropriate medical/scientific journals. The report will be released to all participating organizations for posting on their respective websites.

ASHI PT Program Update

A number of changes and improvements have been made to the 2008 PT program. Updates to the PT Program include:

- o ASHI Center – our integrated online system for subscription, data management and reporting is steadily progressing. All subscriber reports will be posted in the ASHI Center for individual labs to download and review.

Electronic reports will now replace the traditional print versions.

- o The American Foundation for Donation and Transplantation (AFDT) has been selected as a vendor for the PT program. AFDT's wealth of experience in the field of proficiency testing will strengthen our program. The leadership of ASHI is delighted to welcome the AFDT'S participation.
- o The program for 2008 will contain several changes in both structure and function:
 - Consolidation of typing surveys. Labs may still enter only those data that they wish to have graded.
 - Antibody and crossmatch surveys will be decreased from 3 to 2; however, the number of samples per survey will increase.
 - Sample volume will be increased.
 - Grading of typing and antibody surveys has been updated to reflect improvements requested by both the PT Committee and ARB.
 - ARB will now have electronic access to ASHI PT reports.
 - AFDT's model of using partner laboratories to send out PT samples has been adopted.
 - The ABO survey will be suspended temporarily until ASHI receives CMS approval for this survey.

Every effort has been made to ensure a successful PT program for 2008. We expect the first shipments to begin in early spring of this year. Every subscriber will receive a detailed letter highlighting all changes to the 2008 PT program, including comprehensive shipping and data entry information.

Congratulations to the Proficiency Testing Committee and the PT Task Force for making this happen!

NOTE - there is still time to subscribe to the program. Please visit the ASHI website for additional information.

CPT Code Task Force Update

This project has long been in the planning stages. Recently, ASHI's CPT Task Force has partnered with NMDP, AABB and CAP to substantially update the CPT codes for histocompatibility testing. The task force is in the process of developing models for the different types of tests performed in histocompatibility laboratories. The goal of the Task Force is to have a draft model for October 2008. The Task Force invites all ASHI members to use the Forum feature on the ASHI website and post comments, issues, suggestions.

Thanks to the members of the CPT Task Force for getting this much needed project moving and collaborating with NMDP, CAP and AABB.

Information for UNOS Laboratories

There is a new report now accessible in UNet under TIEDI. It is called the "Discrepant HLA Typing Report." It lists the donors that were typed by more than one laboratory and the HLA types that did not agree. The report is still in the final stages of development and shows lab discrepancies for each lab for the past several years.

It is important for all labs to access this report frequently and resolve all discrepancies with other labs. ASHI standards require laboratories to follow up on HLA typing discrepancies promptly. Laboratories should have a policy and procedure for discrepancy resolution and maintain documentation that all discrepancies have been resolved.

ASHI Regional Workshops

Don't forget the ASHI Regional Workshops. They promise to be even better than the very popular programs we enjoyed last year. The Workshops will be held:

March 28 -29	Indianapolis, Indiana
May 2 - 3	Atlanta, Georgia
June 13 - 14	Las Vegas, Nevada

The Regional Workshops provide an excellent opportunity for continuing education and networking for all levels of histocompatibility laboratory personnel. For information and registration forms, see the website. Once again the Education Committee has brought us excellent programs.

Haven't Tried the Forum Yet?

Save all of those phone calls! Post your comments where others can read them and start a discussion! Check out the Forum on the ASHI website and join the discussion on one of the posted topics or start a new discussion.

To post a comment on the ASHI Forum, simply follow these step-by-step instructions:

- 1) Go to <http://www.ashi-hla.org/>
- 2) On the black menu bar, click on ASHI Forum
- 3) You'll see: The ASHI Forum is now available here. Click "here."
- 4) Click on the second topic under Introduction and Instructions entitled "Forum information"
- 5) Click on the discussion topic you wish to join.
- 6) To post a comment, you must log on as a member using your userID and password (member #).

The items listed above all present opportunities for ASHI members to stay informed and get involved. In the past few months, I have been very impressed by the efforts of so many ASHI members on committees, inspections and projects of all kinds. I cannot thank you enough!