

# President's Column

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It's that time again. It's time to store away the charcoal grills, the beach chairs, and the sunscreen and make sure you are registered for the Annual Meeting.

ASHI's 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting will be held from Monday, Oct. 27, through Friday Oct. 31, 2008, at the Sheraton Centre Toronto located in the heart of Toronto's financial and dining and entertainment districts.

The theme for this year's meeting comes directly from ASHI's vantage point at the convergence of basic science in immunogenetics and clinical medicine. We are in the unique position of translating breakthroughs in basic science into clinical testing and being able to monitor therapy in ways that have not been available to our clinical colleagues ever before. We are looking forward to the future, and outward to our partners in basic science and to our clinical partners in organ transplantation, bone marrow transplantation, and blood transfusion.

To accomplish our objectives for this meeting, we have assembled a group of speakers who are not only experts, but also at the top in each of their cutting-edge fields.

Each morning features a plenary session and a symposium highlighting recent advances in genome-wide array studies, application of gene discoveries to testing and therapy, and updates on immune responses and their regulatory control. A special joint AABB-ASHI plenary session will address Transfusion Related Acute Lung Insufficiency (TRALI). The afternoon sessions each day have been set aside for abstract sessions highlighting current research, and interactive workshops addressing histocompatibility testing in different clinical settings. A special workshop on communicating and listening techniques, so important for interacting in today's healthcare environment, is also planned for an afternoon session.

On Monday, ASHI's accreditation program will conduct a day-long inspector training workshop that will provide an overview of the inspection experience as well as an update in the requirements for laboratories. This year's workshop will feature presentations by representatives from EFI, NMDP, and UNOS. The

workshop is designed for both new and active inspectors, and inspectors are required to attend one workshop every two years to maintain active status. Contact Melissa McElroy for further details or to register for the workshop. If you are not an ASHI inspector and want to hear an update on accreditation and proficiency testing, plan to attend the accreditation and proficiency testing update on Monday afternoon.

The meeting will open officially on Monday evening with the keynote address titled, "The Mechanism of Passive Immunization by Maternal Antibodies Revealed by Electron Tomography," presented by Pamela Bjorkman, PhD.

The Tuesday morning plenary session will highlight genome-wide association studies and the discovery of genes predisposing to diseases. Peter Donnelly, FRS, and Stephen Rich, MD, will be the featured speakers. The symposium on Tuesday morning will delve into the genetic determinants underlying mechanisms of disease and guiding therapy in type 1 diabetes. The speakers will be Gerald Nepom, MD, PhD, Jane Buchner, MD, and Ivana Durinovic-Bello PhD.

Tuesday afternoon provides two abstract sessions and three workshops. One workshop is titled "Less Conventional Assays to Analyze Humoral Immune Responses," presented by Anat Tambur, DMD, PhD. The second workshop is titled "Communication and Listening: Techniques for High Performance," presented by Patricia Kopko, MD, Donna Phelan, CHS, MT(HEW). The third workshop is "Virtual Crossmatching in the Real World," presented by Paul Warner, PhD. Don't miss the poster session and reception on Tuesday evening. There will be a special reception for all ASHI inspectors and all meeting participants from our international laboratories after the poster session.

On Wednesday, the plenary session will focus on the immune regulatory genes and their functions with speakers Minnie Sarwal, MD, PhD, and Kathryn Wood, DPhil. The Wednesday symposium will highlight the effectors of the immune system and the featured speakers will be Allan Kirk, MD, PhD, and Elaine Reed, PhD.

Wednesday afternoon, there will again be two abstract sessions; a workshop titled “Opportunities in Living Donor Kidney Transplantation,” presented by Mary Sue Leffell, PhD, and Andrea Zachary PhD; and a second workshop titled “KIR Genotyping and Clinical Relevance,” presented by Raja Rajalingam, PhD, and Victoria Turner, PhD.

This year, the Director’s Forum and Technologist’s Forum will be held as separate, concurrent sessions on Wednesday afternoon immediately following the Annual Business Meeting. Plan to attend these important and informative sessions.

Thursday morning’s plenary session is the joint AABB-ASHI Symposium, which will focus on TRALI and feature speakers Mark Popovsky, MD, Mark Looney, MD, and David Stroncek, MD. The Terasaki Award recipient and the Rose Payne Award recipient will be presented during the awards symposium following the TRALI symposium.

Thursday afternoon will include two abstract sessions; a workshop titled “Case Studies in Solid Organ Transplantation,” presented by Dana Collins, CHS; and a second workshop titled “Case Studies in Stem Cell Transplantation,” presented by Shannon Eller, CHS.

Of course, you will want to attend the annual banquet on Thursday evening, Oct. 30, from 7 p.m. to midnight. This year’s banquet will be held in a haunted castle. The site is really the beautiful Casaloma, a 19<sup>th</sup> century mansion, now a museum, and is said to be home to a few “spirited” occupants.

On Friday, the last day of the meeting, there will be a morning session devoted to this year’s great debate, “Organ Allocation: Equity vs. Utility.” Michael Cecka, PhD, and I will try to settle this controversy once and for all.

To wrap up the meeting in grand style, the “Annual Meeting Highlights” will be presented by Andrea Zachary, PhD, Walter Herczyk, CHS, and Sarah San Antonio-Santos, CHS.

The meeting will adjourn at noon on Friday, Oct. 31.

With all of the exciting educational and networking opportunities, remember to enjoy all that the host city, Toronto, has to offer, including world-class dining and entertainment, sight-seeing and shopping. Explore the PATH, the underground network of shops. Enjoy the view from the CN Tower.

Although I will do it so many times before the meeting closes in October, I want to extend my thanks to Karen Nelson, PhD, our fabulous program committee, every one of our sponsors, and Clare MacNab from Association Headquarters, for their relentless efforts to make this meeting one of the best ever.

Please Note: As of Jan. 31, 2008, all U.S. residents are required to present a valid passport for all land, air, and sea travel to Canada.