

President's Column

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As your new President, I would first like to say how proud and honored I am to serve this wonderful Society. We have just been re-energized with a fabulous annual meeting, and this is a good time to focus on our missions for the next year. The Executive Board has approved the latest Vision Statement for ASHI:

ASHI is the foremost authority and leading educational resource in immunogenetics and histocompatibility.

Our vision is to improve the quality of human life and health through the translation and implementation of scientific innovations to clinical practice.

With this in mind, I would like to challenge the committees to make this the most productive year possible. The strength of ASHI lies with its membership, and we have been blessed with strong leaders and hard workers who are willing to give so much of their time to advance our profession. For all the wonderful volunteers, we thank you for your efforts and encourage everyone to get involved in some way with ASHI. You will get so much more out of being a member!

Current Activities and Future Challenges

ASHI University

Introduced at the 2007 annual meeting, this Web-based site can be accessed through the ASHI Web site. Several modules have been completed, and several more should be added in the near future. This is a wonderful concept and provides useful references and continuing education. However, it has been woefully underused this past year. Please introduce your staff to this site and encourage everyone to make use of this tool.

Challenges for this committee include:

- Obtaining more volunteers to work on new modules.
- Promoting greater use of the site.
- Bringing the Inspector Training Modules to the site—these modules provide useful information for both inspectors and the laboratories as they prepare for an ASHI inspection.
- Providing Powerpoint presentations with text or audio from selected talks given at the regional meetings and next year's annual meeting. This would be very valuable for those who may not have been able to attend the meetings and also for those who attended, but would like to review some of the slides to remember the details of the lectures.

CPT Codes

Special thanks need to be given to Dr. Sandra Helman for her tireless efforts in getting proposals submitted for new HLA typing and crossmatching CPT codes. The CPT committee will be working with the AMA to get these approved for next year. In the meantime, we will work to revise the CPT codes for HLA antibody testing. Please contact Sandy if you have any ideas or if you would like to be part of this committee.

Proficiency Testing

The PT Committee has to be commended for all their work this past year. We would also like to thank AFDT for working with us to enable us to provide continuous PT this year while we worked to make the idea of an ASHI Center for ARB, PT, and other committee activity a reality. We are pleased to have GTI working as our vendor for PT samples starting in 2009. ASHI is developing its own customized software for PT ordering, result entry, analysis, and reporting. Software was available for Engraftment monitoring and B27 testing this year, and we will have our own software for HLA typing and PRA/Crossmatch next year. So once again, the PT Committee will have a very challenging year. They will be responsible for technical support, grading, responding to questions and challenges, and providing a summary report.

It is important our members realize and appreciate how important it is to have our own PT program. We can develop and continually improve it to provide our laboratories with an educational component unparalleled by most other exchanges. Ideas, suggestions, and volunteer time will be welcomed.

Accreditation

Marilyn Pollack had a very productive year as the Program Director for the Accreditation Review Board (ARB) last year and is to be commended for her hard work. The ARB obtained approval from CMS for the addition of General Immunology and has submitted the paperwork for the addition of Infectious Disease testing. This should allow laboratories doing NAT and viral serology testing for deceased donors to use ASHI for accreditation in these areas. Doreen Jezek is the new Program Director for 2008-2009 and has summarized the activities of the ARB in a separate ARB Update article located in this issue. As always, the ARB is functioning very well and is truly a bright feather in ASHI's cap.

Liaisons and External Affairs

Joint Commission: ASHI joined with AABB in petitioning for deemed status with Joint Commission for our laboratory inspections. The response so far has been favorable, and we are optimistic that we may obtain “comparative status” for the areas we inspect. John Hart is the current liaison to Joint Commission.

AABB: There was a joint symposium presented at the ASHI meeting by ASHI and AABB that focused on TRALI. The speakers were excellent, and it was well received. We hope to continue this in the future, alternating between the AABB meeting and the ASHI meeting. Dr. Carol Pancoska is the current liaison to AABB.

FOCIS: ASHI sponsored a symposium at the FOCIS meeting in Boston this past June. Dr. Elaine Reed coordinated this effort. The presentations were well received with lively discussion.

SAEC (Serious Adverse Events Consortium): Dr. Maria Bettinotti is ASHI’s liaison to SAEC and will keep us apprised of developments in the areas of pharmacogenetics to assess ASHI’s role in helping establish standards for HLA testing related to adverse drug effects.

NMDP: Harriet Noreen is the ASHI liaison to NMDP. A new NMDP policy for high resolution typing by confirmatory laboratories was recently sent by blast e-mail to all laboratories.

UNOS: It is very important ASHI is involved in discussions currently taking place concerning kidney allocation. ASHI will strive to work with the UNOS Histocompatibility Committee to provide a strong and unified voice to present the immunology arguments that need to be taken into account when developing allocation protocols.

New Focus

I would like to see ASHI become a key source of information and data analysis for the transplant community. We have the expertise, and we have the connections. We need to organize the different committees to start working together on some common goals. Scientific and Clinical Affairs, Director and Technologist Affairs, Education, External Affairs, and Publications committees can all be involved. It is important we organize studies, develop a plan, publish, and present our findings to the transplant community. It seems all too often we are “reacting” to what is being done by other organizations and committees. It is time we be “proactive” and get our message across before policies are made. We need to be instrumental in educating physicians, transplant coordinators, and others involved in transplantation on the role of HLA and immunogenetics in transplantation. Please have your committee members brainstorm new ideas and start developing plans. I look forward to working with all of you in making this the best year ever for ASHI!

Arden Systems HLAnalyzer III Needed

Computer-driven HLAnalyzer III (automated stage with keypads) for inspection and evaluation of the 60, 72, and 96 well trays used in the microcytotoxicity test.

Package should include:

1. Motorized stage
2. Control cable
3. “Y” cable
4. Dual keypads
5. Controller box
6. Keyboard cable
7. Parallel port interface

Two packages needed if available. Will entertain best offer. Please call (212) 305-6941 or e-mail: kmh3@columbia.edu