

President's Column

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As we head into the last quarter of my term as ASHI president, I am assessing the progress made this year and where we need to go. The accomplishments are many, but there is still much work to be done. The regional meetings were very well received and proved to be a positive experience for both the faculty and the attendees. Special thanks go to Dean Sylvaria for organizing the meetings and to the wonderful faculty (Andrea Zachary, Susie Leffell, Mike Gautreaux, David Senitzer, and Anajane Smith) that made it such a success. Education is one of ASHI's strengths and we will always be dedicated to the success of our educational programs. The Board has recommended that the regional meetings be reduced from three on-site meetings to two meetings next year. This is in response to increased costs associated with the meetings, coupled with a reduction in registrations. By doing this, we hope to maintain the same high-quality meetings without operating in the red. In addition, there are plans to capture the lectures digitally and make them available on ASHI-U so the material can be shared to an even larger group of individuals.

Ongoing Projects

We have made much progress in getting CPT codes established for flow cytometric crossmatching; we have learned a lot about the process this past year. Dr. Sandy Helman has spearheaded this effort and we appreciate her hard work and dedication. We hope to get typing and antibody testing codes revised next. We hope to get the submission process started by October.

In March 2008, ASHI co-sponsored a transplant conference to review the state of HLA antibody testing. This meeting served as a catalyst for many centers to take a closer look at their antibody testing and how it can be optimized and used as a valuable tool for the transplant team. As a result, there have been many publications on the subject during the past year. We are currently trying to provide our members with a summary of the discussions from that meeting and developments since.

The ARB has recently submitted an application to accredit for infectious disease. This will include NAT testing and serology testing that is required for deceased donors prior to transplant.

Strategic Planning

At the June ASHI board meeting, a strategic planning meeting was held on Saturday, June 13. Being a person that is more of a "do"-er than a talker, I must admit that I went into this meeting with the idea that I would hear the same old words that we have all heard before and nothing much would come out of it. However, I was pleasantly surprised by the presentation and the fact that we actually ended the day with real goals and action plans. I was truly motivated to take an organized approach to moving the society along. The board is now working very hard to put our plans into action.

Besides maintaining and enhancing our core competencies (ARB, educational meetings, publications), we have identified the following immediate goals for the society.

Achieve and Maintain Financial Stability

In the current economic climate, there has been much concern that ASHI remain financially sound. To this end, we will continue to be diligent in reviewing our investment policies and make recommendations for change when warranted. While we have been striving to keep committees within budget, we want to take this to a higher level and determine efficiency goals for each committee, where applicable, and set goals and expectations for each of our programs. This will include a better definition of volunteer responsibilities vs. Association Headquarters responsibilities to achieve the best benefit-to-cost ratio.

Increase Membership

This turned out to be one of the more progressive topics of the meeting as several new and exciting ideas were discussed to increase membership. The liaison to membership was asked to present some suggestions for new member categories. It was also noted that there are very few institutional members. The reason for this seems to be that there is really no benefit to the institution. The Membership Committee was asked to consider adding incentives for institutional membership, such as free or reduced registration to meetings, credit for CEU from ASHI-U, PT discounts, etc. It will be interesting to see what the Membership Committee will have to offer next year.

Create a Quality and Relevant PT Program

In order to be a success, the ASHI PT program must offer more to its subscribers than other programs. The last two years have been quite a challenge for the PT Committee. They have consumed much time and energy from the ASHI board as well. We hope to get the PT software validated this fall so it will be ready to run in 2010. In the meantime, an overhaul of the PT Committee structure and function will need to be done. We need to get all members of the committee active and involved in the processes so that experienced and competent individuals are moved to leadership positions. There needs to be a salaried manager of the program to offer expertise and continuity to the "business" of the PT program. We need to create measurable criteria to evaluate the program (financial, customer satisfaction, testing and grading accuracy, and educational value). Our goal is to have all this in place by the end of the year.

Be Viewed as a Scientific Leader

We want to be viewed as a scientific leader in the fields of transplantation and immunogenetics. We have been active in becoming partners with other professional societies by having a presence at their annual meetings and participating in symposia of common interests. We have been successful in collaborating with AST, FOCIS, and AABB this year. We have also been active participants of transplant leadership roundtables sponsored by UNOS, and have established a relationship with NMDP and FACT. It is important that we continue to be strong leaders not only in our own society, but with other societies as well. We need to strengthen our scientific projects, clinical and basic research, white papers, and manuscripts. It is important that ASHI's opinions not only be heard, but be sought and respected by other professional societies. Only then will we have met our goal!

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