

*President's Column*

Adriana Zeevi, PhD, D(ABHI)

Dear ASHI members,

In this issue, I would like to share with you how ASHI has progressed and accomplished some of the important goals we set for ourselves, and I will also expand on the challenges that we need to face.

We had our first full board of directors meeting on January 25 and Dr. William W. Ward, our Secretary, presents a detailed summary in this issue. We have implemented changes in the structure of the board meeting that improve efficiency and cut costs. Board members are now more involved with the committee chairs; together they provide a detailed report of committee activities and identify areas that need further discussion. There was a very positive energy among all the board members. We were able to cut the meeting to one day and save valuable time and expenses.

Having a Vice President of Operations has meant a tremendous improvement in managing the society. Donna Phelan is an endless source of energy, commitment and knowledge, and her constant assistance makes a difference. I thank her and all those that proposed and implemented this change. Another vital source of support for the president and the society comes from the competent staff. Steve Echard, our new Executive Director (see box on next page), has stepped into the job with enthusiasm and commitment to make it work. The new Assistant Executive Director, Kimberly Glen, will be assisting him. Monthly conference calls between Steve and the executive committee have been initiated and we are in the process of building a strong infrastructure by developing an up-to-date Standard Policy and Procedures Manual. Dr. Sandy Rosen-Bronson, our President Elect, is guiding this important task.

One of the most important board responsibilities is reviewing and approving the 2003 annual budget. We have evaluated all expenses and incomes, keeping in mind our strategic plan and also our financial situation. We made a very important shift towards reducing the costs and increasing net revenue. This is only possible by having each committee buy in and apply a well-developed business plan. Such change is not easy; it requires more control of expenses and sometimes the realization that we cannot afford to do everything we want to do. But on the bright side, if we are disciplined and fiscally responsible, we can engage in the educational activities that we want to support. Furthermore, I believe we have to develop a more organized approach in soliciting unrestricted educational funding to support some of our awards and educational activities.

The ASHI Accreditation Program's report to the board was outstanding, relevant to the goals of the program, and it responds to the need to improve revenue by controlling the

cost of the inspections. Furthermore, CMS recognized ASHI's accreditation program as a program that has a perfect record by "meeting all validation requirements and also by having a perfect agreement on citations." Congratulations to the program director Gary Teresi and to all the chairs, commissioners, and inspectors who put in the time and the dedication to achieve such a high standard. The board of directors and the ARB would like to extend special thanks to two members, Dorothy Levis and Marilyn Pollack, for their efforts in updating the Commissioner and Inspector checklists submitted to CMS. Our outstanding performance is very crucial in these times when we might have to compete with other organizations to maintain our status as the main recognized accreditation body.



CAP approved ASHI's Proficiency Testing program, and we also approved CAP's program. The committee has done a great job navigating the difficulties of establishing a new program and all the logistics associated with such an effort. However, the work is not finished and I believe this will be a very active committee.

The Quality Assurance and Standards committee is making significant changes in order to cope with the work and to respond to the needs of implementing new technologies in the clinical laboratories. This is an important function of our society and we have to provide the resources to make it happen in a timely fashion. To review and write new standards is not an easy task and we thank the chair, Lee Ann Baxter-Lowe, and her committee for their increasing commitment to accomplish these goals.

In response to concerns of laboratory directors regarding the new National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) initiative of "Customized HLA Typing Services," the ASHI executive committee and the national affairs committee proposed the establishment of two task forces. Dr. Bob Bray is chairing the task force that will examine issues regarding the new NMDP practice and the impact on the laboratories providing services to bone marrow programs. This task force includes the following doctors: Doug Smith, David Senitzer, Pam Kimball, Vicky Turner, Gary Teresi, and Harriet Noreen. They have already begun their work through conference calls and information gathering. The second task force, chaired by Dr. Sandy Rosen-Bronson and assisted by Drs. Marcelo Fernandez-Vina and Lee Ann Baxter-Lowe, will look into improving the educational material available to lab directors regarding bone marrow programs and the NMDP. We will also evaluate the possibility for ASHI to have a more visible role in providing education at the various bone marrow transplant meetings.

The planning for ASHI's 2003 annual meeting took place in Miami on January 10. Dr. Bray, Program Chair, and the members of the committee developed an interesting blend of educational and clinical programs for the next annual meeting, which is in Miami. The committee responded to the members' comments to bring important clinical issues to the annual meeting. The composition of the meeting will be balanced between solid organ and bone marrow transplantation. There will be ample time during the meeting for discussions, debates and networking. We strongly urge you to join us in Miami and promote the meeting among colleagues and co-workers.

An important function of the Scientific and Clinical Affairs committee is to produce a series of communications, "White Papers," regarding our position on the role of HLA-specific antibodies in renal and thoracic transplantation and the role of HLA matching in solid organ transplantation. Dr. Peter Nickerson, co-chair of this committee, has made real progress and ASHI members will have an opportunity to review and comment before the final publication in *Human Immunology*. These documents will provide a strong platform for our interaction with clinicians and members of other transplantation societies.

As I mentioned in October, this year we have reached some important milestones in being recognized by sister societies. In April we will participate in two main events. On April 9 at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation (ISHLT) in Vienna, Austria, ASHI is co-sponsoring with ISHLT a symposium on "Clinical significance of HLA and non-HLA antibodies in heart and lung transplantation." In Washington, D.C., April 23-24, ASHI members will be invited to discuss side-by-side with clinicians and surgeons from AST, ASTS, and ISHLT the impact of humoral rejection in renal and thoracic transplantation, diagnosis, and treatment. This event is sponsored by many

societies and agencies and ASHI's participation will be supported by contribution from FAIT. We have a key role in evaluating the published relevant material and guiding the consensus that will be reached at this meeting. Future applications in clinical practice and patient care depend on our ability to clearly communicate to the other participants.

Collectively, all ASHI committees are working on their strategic goals. To facilitate their work I would like to encourage continuous interaction between the committees and the board members. I want to thank all the chairs and committee members for their understanding of the limited financial support and the need to be fiscally responsible.

In closing, I would like to pay a tribute to two ASHI members who recently passed away: Dr. Rachel McKenna from Winnipeg, Canada, and Dr. Richard Mahoney from Portland, Maine. We will miss them and we offer our sincere condolences to their families.

We all witnessed the tragedy of the Columbia shuttle and its crew of very special and talented men and women. They were "teachers" bound by a common dream to improve mankind and they did not hesitate to take the risks and challenges associated with their mission. We all feel a purpose that inspires us to get up in the morning and face our challenges. New and "old" ASHI members, by your active participation and engagement in ASHI's activities, we also can fulfill our mission "to improve the quality of human life through the understanding and application of histocompatibility and immunogenetics."

Adriana Zeevi

## Steven Echard

### ASHI Executive Director

The American Society for Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics is pleased to welcome Steven C. Echard, CAE, as its new executive director.

Steve oversees all ASHI activities including budgeting, financial management, staff, membership recruitment and retention, regional and annual meetings, publicity and new program development. Steve also works in concert with the board and its committees and acts as the liaison for members and the public.

Prior to joining ASHI, Steve worked at the American College of Rheumatology, where he was involved in all aspects of medical society management. He quickly advanced at the College, from manager of educational programs, to director of rheumatology research and training, to director of government affairs, and finally to director of administration and governance.

"I am very excited about the opportunity to work with such a dedicated group of volunteers," Steve says. "I hope my knowledge and breadth of experience will benefit the organization as we work together to achieve the vision and mission set forth by the ASHI leadership."



Steve holds a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Georgia State University. He also received certification from the Institute for Organization Management at UCLA and the designation as Certified Association Executive from the American Society of Association Executives in 1999.