

President's Column

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This is my last column, and I would like to take this opportunity to share with you a few highlights of the year and also thank all the board members, committee chairs and members, ASHI members and Association Headquarters (AH) staff for their continuous support.

Together with other transplantation societies, ASHI has been involved in the organization of several scientific educational events, including the "Consensus Meeting on Humoral Rejection," invited workshops at the International Heart and Lung Conference, and lectures at the NMDP spring meeting. We had the opportunity to contribute our expertise and knowledge in the areas of clinical transplantation and immunogenetics. This is an ongoing strategic goal and we will continue to be involved with the sister transplantation societies. We are already discussing with the organizers of the 2004 American Transplant Congress (ATC) meeting our participation in the educational sessions that take place pre-conference. I have been extremely pleased with the level of response and professionalism of all ASHI members who have been asked to contribute to these events. I hope we will continue to be recognized as part of the transplantation team. In his address to the attendees of the 2003 ATC meeting, the president of ASTS, Dr. Jim Schulak, recognized ASHI as an important component of the transplantation team. He gave an excellent historical review of our society and its achievements, including ASHI's deemed status as an accreditation body and our journal, *Human Immunology*.

To maintain ASHI's visibility in the fields of clinical transplantation, histocompatibility and immunogenetics, several white papers were commissioned by the executive board and national affairs committee. This year, an important position paper was accepted in the *American Journal of Transplantation* (AJT) regarding the "Pre-Transplant Assessment of Donor Reactive Antibody in Renal Transplantation: Contra-indication Versus Risk." Authored by Dr. Howie Gebel, Dr. Bob Bray, and Dr. Peter Nickerson, this paper was internally reviewed by three other ASHI members and the board of directors prior to submission. It was peer reviewed by AJT and then accepted for publication. Again, I want to thank all the participants in the process and hope to maintain the momentum with additional submissions in the future.

Some of the latest changes in UNOS bylaws were passed with a majority vote by the UNOS board despite being met with resistance from the UNOS histocompatibility committee and ASHI representatives. Dr. Susan Saidman, the chair of the OPTN/UNOS histocompatibility committee, has addressed the newly approved standard H3.100 - "Crossmatches are not mandatory for all kidney and pancreas transplant candidates." Several clinicians who felt that the clinical practice was not in compliance with the current UNOS bylaws initiated this

change. For instance, crossmatches are very rarely performed pre-transplantation for liver and other non-renal transplants. Also, in some rare instances, kidney transplant recipients may have been considered without the final crossmatches. Susan had requested that the UNOS board establish a task force that would review all bylaws related to histocompatibility issues and come to the next board meeting with their recommendations. However, her proposal was not accepted and the new bylaw was approved. Therefore, we urge all clinical directors to address in their own center this change in the UNOS bylaws, and to develop together with their clinicians and surgeons clear policies to avoid undesirable complications. Good communication and participation in the decision-making process will assure the best clinical care and fulfill our mission as an integral part of the transplantation team. Our laboratories can provide essential information that can be part of the solution, rather than an obstacle to transplantation. Changes are sometimes met with frustration, but we have to seize the opportunity and become even more involved with the transplantation program. In addition, the national affairs committee and the executive board will consider a response to UNOS regarding the implementation of this new bylaw.



An important development in our society is the continued effort to streamline our bylaws, and the bylaws committee has worked very hard on a new version that was submitted to the membership for comments. As previously noted, the committee incorporated most of the public comments and addressed their various concerns. I hope they will again have a good response from the membership. In addition, Dr. Sandy Rosen-Bronson and Donna Phelan, assisted by Kim Glenn from AH, are developing the "Standing Policies and Procedure Manual" to preserve and document our policies that were omitted from the revised bylaws, and also to develop new policies as needed.

Our financial health was and still is a great concern for the officers and members of ASHI. As I indicated in my first address, we had to implement some important changes to improve our financial status. I am very optimistic with the results so far, and I am confident that I will be able to report at the annual meeting on the various modalities that helped us reach a state of financial growth. Some of these steps included: reductions in the expenses of various committees, greater efficiency in programs generating revenues, and increased contributions from vendors and other groups to support our educational mission and the annual meeting. I thank all for this great achievement and I do hope we continue to maintain a

fiscally responsible budget. At the last board meeting, we devoted half a day to discussions regarding new ways of raising funds for the activities ASHI wants to support. As the result of a very useful and candid discussion, we established several task groups and we chose their leaders or “champions.” Each group is developing the contacts and the material to be presented in order to raise additional funds from both new and established sources. This is an ongoing activity that will generate the resources ASHI needs to maintain our mission and to contribute to the activities that enhance membership benefits. Mr. J. Ram Ray, the director of corporate relations at the Marrow Foundation, sent ASHI a note indicating that “The Marrow Foundation is pleased to join the HLA community worldwide in thanking ASHI for its continued support of the Sequence Database Website.” This Web site benefits ASHI members and it is an important resource for the whole histocompatibility community.

We continue to strive to improve our communications and interactions with NMDP. The board of directors approved the appointment of an NMDP liaison to ASHI who will be invited to ASHI’s annual meeting. We believe this will facilitate ongoing interactions with the ARB and the QAS committee. In addition, there is a link from the NMDP Web site to the ASHI Web site with contact information on ASHI accredited laboratories. There are still many issues to be resolved, but I believe that by promoting a more harmonious atmosphere we can ultimately achieve more.

The 29th annual meeting is coming soon and I invite you all to come and participate in this exciting event. This year the program committee, chaired by Dr. Bray, prepared an outstanding program that features some new and very clinically oriented sessions and workshops. This is the best time for colleagues, friends, and new and old ASHI members to come and share their experiences. I also want to thank all of those who have generously pledged items to the silent auction. In order to succeed, we need all of you to come with enthusiasm and generosity to view and purchase these special gifts. Your contributions will go to a wonderful cause: to support the International Immunogenetics Summer School.

I am sad to report on great losses for our community with the deaths of Dr. Robert Good and Dr. Carolina Manning.

Dr. Rene Duquesnoy, who had the privilege to be trained by Dr. Good, expressed very eloquently, “Dr. Robert Good was one of the greatest immunologists in the second half of the 20th century and a pioneer in bone marrow transplantation.” His address in memory of Dr. Good was published in *Human Immunology* 64, 2003 and is also incorporated in this issue.

Dr. Carolina H. Manning, director of the Histocompatibility Laboratory at Wake Forest University Medical Center, died July 30, 2003, after a twelve-year battle with cancer. She was a very active member of ASHI who served in many capacities, most recently as regional commissioner on the Accreditation Review Board and as Vice Chair of the Director’s Affairs Committee. Many friends, colleagues and ASHI members will miss her and honor her memory.

It has been almost a year since I accepted the honor to serve the society as its president. It was a challenging year, but I have a lot to be thankful for and I enjoyed the support, enthusiasm and generosity of the board of directors, ASHI members, AH staff and my family. I do believe in cooperation, compassion and love as important elements in our life. In many public lectures, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said:

“Cooperation is imperative for a healthy family, body, society and nation.”

“How does one develop cooperation? Voluntary actions, altruism and showing concern for the welfare and rights of others.”

“We should not think that the problem is a huge one and that the individual is too small. The problem may be big, but if every individual takes the initiative, then there is a real chance.”

These quotations were compiled and edited by Renuka Singh in the book *Live in a Better Way, Reflections on Truth, Love and Happiness*.

ASHI may have many challenges to overcome, but guided by professionalism and by showing compassion to others I believe we will gain mutual understanding and respect.

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