

President's Column

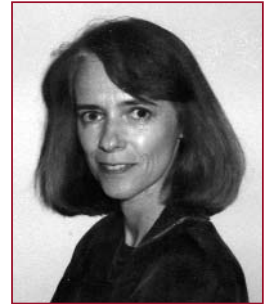
Sandra Rosen-Bronson, PhD, D(ABHI)

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

During the past year I have been writing about some of ASHI's key restructuring and reorganizing efforts that began more than three years ago. I would now like to update you on where ASHI is headed in the future. In accordance with our standing policies and procedures, in 2005 we will once again formally evaluate, update, and adjust our Strategic Plan. This process is critical to the Society because our Strategic Plan serves as the template and driving force for all of ASHI's activities. In preparation for the 2005 strategic planning process, the ASHI leadership spent one morning at the June board of directors meeting reviewing the current Strategic Plan and discussing the process of strategic long-range planning and how it will be used as a guide in the development of an updated Strategic Plan. The process included a review of the 2000 plan and addressed questions such as: 1) What progress have we made toward our goals? 2) What are some of the new challenges that ASHI will face? 3) What does ASHI need to do to prepare for future challenges? At the conclusion of the session, the board decided to appoint a Strategic Planning Task Force to develop the 2005 Strategic Plan. The group, led by Dr. Peter Nickerson, will be made up of 15 individuals: three board members and individuals representing various ASHI interests. Our goal is to have equal representation from technologist and doctoral individuals and to include members new to ASHI, as well as long-term members. We have invited international members, ASHI inspectors, committee chairs, transplant physicians, and past ASHI leaders. By the time you read this letter, the task force will be well on its way toward developing a plan. You will be asked along the way for your thoughts and ideas to validate and augment the task force's and board's assumptions. Over the course of the upcoming year, the group will work with the board of directors to refine ASHI's mission statement and to develop a final list of goals, strategies, and outcome measurements. A final document will be presented to the board of directors for approval in June 2005 with implementation to begin in October 2005.

Once the new Strategic Plan is finalized, it will be the board's job to translate it into a series of projects that are designed to promote the continued development of the ASHI organization, and to promote its contributions to patients and physicians within the transplant community. Under the new ASHI organizational structure that I have been telling you about throughout the past year, as potential projects are identified and the financial impact on ASHI is evaluated, they will be prioritized and assigned to one or more division heads. The division head will be responsible for implementing and guiding the project to completion in a timely manner. The committees within each division represent the resources available to the division head as the project is undertaken. Initially, the division head will work closely with the committee chairs to develop a

project strategy and to identify the necessary project-related tasks. However, management of these tasks will be the responsibility of the committee chair, working with their committee members.



Enough about the future. I would like to now share a few of the accomplishments our members and our Society have achieved during the past year. One of the concerns identified during our strategic planning meeting in 2000 was that ASHI had an image problem. We were not being included in critical scientific discussions where we truly have unique expertise and a valuable contribution to make. As a result of this, one of the goals we laid out for ourselves was to focus on establishing the Society's reputation as a resource for quality clinical histocompatibility testing and building alliances with related organizations with similar interests and goals. While there is still work to be done, we are clearly making progress. Some of the more subtle indicators of this progress include the fact that a recurring message from our surgeon colleagues at the American Transplant Congress (ATC) this spring in Boston was the need to partner with their HLA laboratory to evaluate transplant risk factors, to establish effective desensitization protocols, and to identify meaningful approaches for post-transplant monitoring. The ASHI booths at the ATC and the 2004 U.S. Transplant Games were also successful and helped to educate the transplant community about us and what we can offer.

In the bone marrow transplant arena, the NMDP is more often partnering with ASHI to communicate with HLA laboratories and to solicit our help and expertise concerning accreditation and regulatory questions, as well as for typing and search strategies. We are currently working with the NMDP Histocompatibility Committee to survey BMT centers through their HLA laboratories to obtain information about how many transplant centers routinely monitor for HLA antibodies and perform donor/recipient crossmatching prior to stem cell transplantation. While we are beginning to build alliances with the BMT community, there is certainly room for more interaction in many transplant programs and a clear need for more hands-on guidance from an HLA expert during the donor search and selection process.

More direct indicators of our progress include a very successful and well attended day-long symposium session at the ATC co-sponsored by ASHI and the American Society of Transplantation (AST) titled "The Tissue Typing Laboratory and its Clinical Applications." In addition, the recent election by the AST membership of ASHI's Immediate Past-President, Dr. Adriana Zeevi, to its board of directors is a sure sign that our

members, and hopefully our organization, are gaining the respect of the transplant community.

On a broader scope, within the past year, ASHI was invited by JCAHO to nominate a representative to their Laboratory Professional and Technical Advisory Committee. Ms. Donna Phelan was nominated by ASHI and approved by JCAHO. In addition, ASHI was asked to become a partner society in a new organization developed and initially funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The purpose of this organization, called the Institute for Quality in Laboratory Medicine (IQLM), is to promote improvements in laboratory testing and services to benefit public health. Equally important, Dr. Robert Bray, along with Dr. Robert Vogt from the CDC, has successfully submitted a proposal to NCCLS, the global standards-developing organization, to establish a subcommittee to develop a consensus guideline for flow cytometry in transplantation applications. The subcommittee members will include laboratory directors, clinicians involved with organ transplantation, technologists that routinely perform testing, and administrators with regulatory oversight this area of testing. ASHI will have three official representatives on this subcommittee.

In closing, I would like to say I believe that ASHI has come a long way in the past three years. Beginning with the seeds of change planted by Dr. Dolly Tyan, our metamorphosis was further nurtured and promoted by my predecessors, Dr. Bray and Dr. Zeevi. We are now close to having successfully re-engineered ourselves and are learning how to be a flexible and efficient Society fully capable of attaining our mission and goals. Since this is my last letter to you as President, I would like to say thank you to the membership for your help and support during the past year. I would like to thank the board of directors, who have patiently endured, adapted, and worked very hard to make the new ASHI structure strong and enduring. I would especially like to thank our Vice-President of Operations, Ms. Phelan, and our President-Elect, Dr. Charlie Orosz, for their hard work and their willingness to work with me as a team. Three heads really are better than one and it would have been a very long year without them. Last but not least, I'd like to thank Ms. Kim Glenn, Mr. Steve Echard, and all of the ASHI staff for their help, support, and understanding this past year.

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