

President's Message

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Newsletter - February 2001

Greetings and a belated Happy New Year!!

❖ Unfortunately, I must start this first newsletter with some sad news. We have just received word that Dr. Julia Bodmer has passed away this last week after an illness, which has had her in the hospital since Christmas. Julia was a wonderful colleague, friend and mentor to many of us and deeply devoted to our specialty and the furtherance of the highest standards of testing. This is truly a great loss for all of us and she will be greatly missed. However, we can honor her by upholding the principles she so strongly advocated.

❖ On a different note, I want to update you on the many activities that have been going on behind the scenes at ASHI since the annual meeting.

❖ As you know, at the annual meeting we were notified that the Federal Regulations (42CFR493.1265) require specified histocompatibility tests for non-renal organs, which are not uniformly the standard of practice. The history of the problem lies in the fact that when ASHI renewed its deemed status with HCFA, the accreditation checklist (which was about 95 pages long) was split into two checklists (one with the "must" standards and one with the "should" standards) so that accreditation paperwork and inspections could be streamlined. These separated checklists were submitted along with about 1000 pages of other required documentation to HCFA for their required review. In their review, HCFA asked about the "should" standards and we were then apprised that in the government's view, "should" equals "must." They also stated that should they find a program not in compliance with the regulations, the program could anticipate the possibility of a Medicare audit. This obviously created a difficult dilemma vis a vis our respective clinical programs.

❖ Dr. Bray and I have been in contact with HCFA, CDC, the Presidents of ASTS and AST, and the UNOS Board to outline both the history of the problem and to seek their cooperation in putting together an evidence based consensus document to submit to the government to see whether and how the regulations should be changed. Of note, our sister societies do not view this as an issue limited to livers, but include other non-renal organs (e.g., hearts, lungs) as well. In addition, there are now questions arising about renal transplantation, and AST/ASTS have invited meetings in place to address allocation for all organs. These issues are of national importance to every one of us in the Society. I have also come to learn that ASHI has not been included in the list of participating societies and Dr. Bray and I, along with our Public Policy committee, have worked very hard to rectify this as quickly as possible. Obviously, being part of the national debate at the outset is preferable to having to implement protocols that are potentially not evidence based or in the patients' best interests. I will continue to keep you apprised of our progress in this area.

❖ Moving from the national front, I am also sorry to have to inform you that our Vice-President, Dr. Effie Petersdorf, has decided that it is not feasible to run for election as President-Elect this year. Despite her enthusiastic interest and dedication to the Society, the pressures of the 13th International Histocompatibility

Workshop, which she is co-Chairing, make it impossible for her to perform both jobs simultaneously. At the time of her nomination as Vice-President, the IHWG was to occur in 2001 instead of 2002 and the "U" grant, funding a good portion of the workshop, had not been received. The "U" grant has just recently been funded and goes for 5 years, 2002 being only the third year of the grant. Since Effie has major responsibilities for this grant, she feels that she cannot carry out all of her obligations in the manner she feels is necessary. Consequently, she has asked that she not be nominated for President-Elect at this time. However, she indicated that she would be very open and enthusiastic to considering this position at a future time when her commitments would allow it. So, while we wait for this time, the nominations committee has come up with another superb candidate whom you will see in the next Quarterly issue (suspense...).

❖ On a happy note, we have put into place all the new committee Chairs and members and they have already been working very hard on a number of projects. The Chairs, along with their vice-Chairs, members of the Foundation, and Council (36 people in all) met for 2.5 days of strategic planning in Hilton Head two weeks ago prior to the Council meeting. We had two wonderful facilitators who first captured our imaginations and enthusiasm, and then worked to help us develop our new strategic plan, which will be coming out in the next Quarterly. We worked and debated very hard and long, but I believe the new plan captures the spirit and expertise of our Society, reflects and honors our diversity, and moves us toward the cutting edge of immunogenetics and transplantation. Certainly it represents a consensus of all those in attendance and it was remarkable to see how everything came together at the end into a coherent vision and plan. There will be many opportunities for members to plug into projects that need to be accomplished and there is more than enough for all to do. Enclosed in this letter, you will find the responses to the strategic planning of most of the individuals who were present.

❖ Finally let me say how truly pleased I am for all the suggestions that were offered by members pursuant to the annual meeting. Many, many members have wonderful ideas that can be implemented effectively once they are expressed. Particularly now, with a guiding strategic plan, many of these ideas are in perfect alignment with where we want to be going as a Society. So keep those ideas coming and speak up! Make use of the information in the Quarterly as to the committee Chairs, vice-Chairs, liaisons and Council members to direct your ideas to the individual/committee you feel would be most appropriate to receive them. With your help, the Society can only get better.

With warm regards to each of you,

