

President's Message

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We have reached that point here in the Northeast where the progressively limited amounts of daylight (a particular occupational hazard for those of us who go to and return from work in the darkness) and the frequent periods of rain that seem to alternate only with freezing rain and/or snow really get my seasonal affective disorder running at full tilt. On the other hand, it has been a fairly busy and stimulating year for the SPA, and I would like to take this opportunity to summarize some of these successes and ongoing challenges for you.

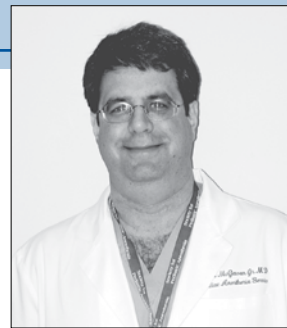
Our overall mission continues and is worth restating: patient care, education, and research. Through these and related activities, we seek to be the recognized voice to advocate on behalf of the perioperative care of children and the practitioners who provide that care. To this end, the Society continues to be quite strong in terms of membership, activities, and finances. Over the past year, we added more than a hundred new members; the total number of full-time members is now over 1,700. Our financial position is solid, in large part due to your ongoing support and that of our corporate sponsors. We also continue work hard to control expenses, and appreciate your help and understanding in this effort (e.g. communicating largely by email, having meeting syllabi on CD-ROM as opposed to printing, which saves more than \$40K per year). Board members Lynn Martin and Joe Tobin have performed yeoman-like service to further improve our financial structure and organization (more details about Society finances and fund-raising goals in an upcoming Newsletter).

A major goal of the officers and committee members has been to ensure that your membership is valuable to you, and to identify new ways of increasing that value through high-quality educational offerings and other efforts that support your practice. Current examples include the annual meetings, the Society Newsletter (which now comes out four times per year), and the website (recently revised, with additional revisions and additions on-going). The quality of these efforts is outstanding. They are the result of the hard and persistent work of a large number of SPA members, including the members of the Educational Committee, under the leadership of Jay Deshpande, the current and future Program Directors for our two major meetings, Santhanam Suresh, Nancy Glass, Valerie Armstead, and Randall Flick, and the members of the Communications and Newsletter committees, under the direction of Rita Agarwal, Allison Kinder Ross, and Shobha Malviya. The current membership of these groups can be found on the website. They deserve tremendous credit and thanks for their work.

In the coming year, we will introduce new web-based educational modules on a regular basis. The intent is to provide members with an effective, convenient, and efficient way to garner needed CME credits. The first of these modules should be available on the website by the time you receive this edition of the Newsletter. Their content is based upon the lectures that would have been given at the Fall meeting in New Orleans (which of course had to be cancelled due to Katrina and its aftermath); you should have already received a free CD-ROM containing the syllabus materials for the lectures that would have been presented. Also within the coming year, we plan to be able to directly forward CME credits that you earn from SPA activities to your own personal MOCA (Maintenance of Certification in Anesthesiology) account at the ABA, hopefully making the whole process at least a little easier. We also intend to produce a pediatric anesthesia educational module that will be available to members to help them meet the requirements for maintenance of certification.

This has been a productive year in terms of collaborative and

advocacy efforts on behalf of the specialty of pediatric anesthesia. In response to member concerns, SPA has authored a statement on requirements for the "Pediatric Anesthesia Environment". SPA, the ASA Committee on Pediatric Anesthesia (COPA), and the American Academy of Pediatrics Anesthesia



Section combined to lodge formal objections to the JCAHO "sentinel event" alert on awareness during pediatric anesthesia, and also to inaccuracies contained in a New Yorker article. Complete versions of these statements can be found on the website. The SPA also sponsored an expert consensus conference on the issue of pediatric awareness in May, 2005; the results of this are being prepared for publication at the time of this writing. SPA also joined with COPA to strongly encourage intravenous catheter manufacturers to continue to produce "traditional-type" catheters, particularly in infant sizes; thus far, it appears that availability continues, but we continue to keep an eye on this issue. We look forward to further collaborations of this sort, and seek your help and suggestions about issues that affect your practice where we may be of assistance.

A large group of our colleagues, organized by Don Tyler, has been diligently working to establish QA/complication indicators and methodologies specific to pediatric anesthesia. The task they were given, stated quite simply, was to "define what to collect and how to collect it". The goal is to provide Society members with a system--one that is created and validated by the expertise and experience of a large, diverse group of pediatric anesthesiologists-- to help them meet QA and regulatory requirements in their own practices. A common system would also offer the possibility to establish a large-scale or even national registry with its obvious potential to improve safety and quality in pediatric anesthesia care. This group has made substantial progress, and I expect them to be able to present the results of their work, at least in preliminary form, around the time of the Winter meeting.

FAER (the Foundation for Anesthesia Education and Research) has asked the SPA help it define the "top 10 to 20" critical areas of deficient scientific knowledge that are directly relevant to pediatric anesthesia, and are therefore worthy of future emphasis and research funding. There will be a forum at the Winter SPA meeting this coming February in Sanibel, Florida, to gather opinions and seek consensus from the members of the field about what these areas are. This is a substantial opportunity to have a major impact on the direction of research and the future and advancement of the specialty. I encourage you to give a lot of thought to this issue, and to plan on attending this session at the meeting (which at present is scheduled for late in the afternoon on Saturday). I would also be very interested in receiving your thoughts beforehand by email (francis.mcgowan@childrens.harvard.edu). We will also be sending an email solicitation for thoughts and ideas to the overall membership.

SPA has taken a leadership role in the establishment of the new Congenital Cardiac Anesthesia Society (CCAS), which will be a part of the SPA. We believe that the care of patients with congenital heart disease and the efforts of the people who care for them deserve support and were most appropriately housed within the specialty of pediatric anesthesia. We look forward to the educational and other synergies that will result from this relationship and thereby benefit both our patients and our members; some these will include a one-day meeting every-other-year, before the formal beginning of the Winter meeting, devoted to congenital heart disease, as well as other contributions on the website and at the annual meetings.

There is more about this exciting development in an article by Dean Andropolous this issue of the Newsletter.

As you can see, it has been a pretty busy year. On behalf of all of my fellow officers, committee members, and Society management personnel, I would like to thank you for your interest, efforts, and support. We think that we have made substantial progress on a number of fronts, but clearly there is much more to do. We encourage you to actively identify areas and issues that matter to you and your patients, let us know how we can best address them,

and get involved yourself. We wish you and your families great joy and promise for the coming year. It continues to be a tremendous honor and privilege for me to help represent you and your efforts to care for children.

With warm regards,

Frank McGowan, MD