

The ASA Board of Directors Interim Meeting

Where Do We Stand Now?

By *Linda Mason, M.D.*

ASA Director from California



The interim meeting of the ASA Board of Directors was held on February 23-24, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois. California attendees were Drs. Linda Mason, ASA Director from California; Mark Singleton, ASA Alternate Director from California; Michael Champeau, CSA President-Elect; Patricia Kapur, Chair, Section on ASA Annual Meeting; Linda Hertzberg, CSA Speaker of the House of Delegates; Stanley Stead, Chair of the ASA Committee on Economics; Johnathan Pregler, Vice Speaker of the CSA House of Delegates; and Ms. Barbara Baldwin, Chief Executive Officer.

The four review committees that met on Saturday morning were Administrative Affairs, Professional Affairs, Scientific Affairs, and Finance.

Review Committee on Administrative Affairs

The Administrative Affairs Review Committee considered a proposal that ASA participate in a National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health survey that includes gathering data on occupational hazards in the operating room. A recommendation was made to request relevant data from NIOSH for analysis by the ASA.

Second, considerable discussion took place on the Society for Pediatric Anesthesiology's application to the American Board of Anesthesiology for subspecialty certification in pediatric anesthesiology. Possible negative consequences of this subspecialty certification are manpower shortages and obstacles to providing care to children in rural areas. The board approved the recommendation by the review committee that the ASA oppose the SPA application for subspecialty certification in pediatric anesthesiology.

Review Committee on Professional Affairs

The Committee on Standards and Practice Parameters Interim Report concerning the perioperative management of patients taking clopidogrel, Plavix™, was extensively discussed. It was recommended that a practice alert be developed regarding this drug. A Practice Advisory for Magnetic Resonance Imaging

ASA Board Interim Meeting (cont'd)

Related to Anesthesia Practice is under development. Also the Practice Guidelines for Neuraxial Opioids Associated with Respiratory Depression will be published with a footnote recommending monitoring the adequacy of ventilation following the discontinuation of neuraxial opioids.

Review Committee on Scientific Affairs

The Review Committee on Scientific Affairs commended the Task Force on Smoking Cessation for its development of educational materials and pilot study on smoking cessation before surgery and stated that this is an important public health issue. The committee on Geriatric Anesthesia will begin work on an informational booklet for physicians, called *Considerations for Anesthesiologists: What You Should Know about Your Elderly Patients*.

Review Committee on Finance

The ASA 2008 budget was approved with a possible loss. Increased costs have been seen in the organizational improvement initiative and also increased costs at both the Park Ridge and Washington, D.C., offices.

Educational Session and Legislative Briefing

The ASA has engaged FD, a leading research and communications consulting firm, to conduct a comprehensive branding program for the organization that will include research, brand development, and marketing communication plans. The goal of the project is to develop a clear and consistent ASA “brand” that conveys key attributes about the organization, along with a road map for reaching ASA stakeholders, shaping the correct messages, and communicating with them through the correct marketing disciplines. Planned activities include FD conducting 12 focus groups across the U.S., with a mix of audience including patients, general public, ASA members, prospective members, and referral sources. Brand Development will include development of branding guidelines, logo development, and a visual identity. Marketing Communications Plan Development—where FD, with the ASA’s input, will develop a plan to determine marketing channels and strategies—is the third phase of the project. For more information about FD, go to their Web site at www.fd.com.

Ronald Szabat, J.D., presented several issues that are important to anesthesiology from the Washington perspective. The most important are the Medicare payment rule and the anesthesiology teaching rule. Mr. Szabat reported that a 10.6 percent cut in Medicare funding is scheduled effective July 1, 2008. The ASA has been pursuing an 18-month sustainable-growth-rate-fix bill with the AMA and like-minded specialties. The 32 percent increase in the anesthesia work factor will remain, translating to about \$16,000 a year increase per anesthesiologist.

ASA Board Interim Meeting (cont'd)

Two anesthesiology teaching rule bills have been introduced, HR 2053 by Becerra, a Democrat from California, and S 2056 by Rockefeller, a Democrat from West Virginia. The Becerra bill has 114 cosponsors and the Rockefeller 25 cosponsors, and ASA hopes to get this inequity corrected this year. The other bills pending that will probably not pass this year because of an election year are HR 1866—the Rural Pass Through, HR 2260—the Health Care Truth and Transparency Act, and HR 2994—the National Pain Care Policy Act.

Lisa Percy, J.D., presented a summary of the 2008 State and Regulatory Activities, noting the 14 states that have opted out of physician supervision under the Medicare program. The last state to opt out was in 2005, but Colorado, Texas, and Utah may be facing attempts by CRNAs to opt out. In regard to interventional pain management, Louisiana reconfirmed that interventional pain management is the practice of medicine and not within the traditional scope of practice of a CRNA. An AMA resolution encourages medical societies to advance advisory opinions or legislation similar to the one that occurred in Louisiana. In Missouri advanced-practice nurses are prohibited from injecting therapeutic agents under fluoroscopic guidance that are administered around the spinal cord. Arizona now has been added to the list that has office-based practice regulations.

The ASAPAC and its low percentage of contributions by members was discussed at length. The ASAPAC does tremendous work on our behalf in Congress and has had great success over the last few years. Andy Harris, M.D., is an anesthesiologist and State Senator from Maryland who won the Republican Primary and will compete for a federal House of Representatives seat in November. The ASAPAC was very supportive of his campaign and, if successful, he will be the first anesthesiologist in Congress. Current issues are the Medicare conversion factors, anesthesiology teaching rule, and fair reimbursement for anesthesiology services. The ASAPAC has worked tirelessly to make a difference for all of us.

A comparison of California contributions and ASAPAC members to other states showed that we have work to do. Although California is the largest component society of the ASA (2,684 active members in 2007), so far this year only 122 Californians have contributed to the ASAPAC. In 2007, 341 members from California contributed a total of \$60,038, compared with Alabama, who had 260 contributors and a total of \$105,991.

I cannot emphasize enough how important this involvement is for us in California. We make a difference when we contribute to the ASAPAC because in a large national society, we can have a greater impact this way than individually. Those who contribute to the ASAPAC are advancing the cause for

ASA Board Interim Meeting (cont'd)

all of us, but each of us needs to make a difference with our own contribution. I encourage you to evaluate your own practice with the other members of your group, and make a difference by contributing to the ASAPAC this year. There is strength in numbers, and together we can make a difference for the practice of anesthesiology and for the safety of our patients.

Call for Submission of Resolutions to the House of Delegates

Any CSA member may submit a resolution to the House of Delegates (your elected representatives) on any issue that you deem important. The deliberations pursuant to these resolutions influence the course of action of the CSA during the ensuing year. For assistance in formulating a resolution, you are welcome to contact Linda B. Hertzberg, M.D., Speaker of the House of Delegates.

The House of Delegates will meet on Saturday, May 31, as part of the CSA Annual Meeting at the Hilton Los Angeles/Universal City, Universal City, California. A reference committee meets Friday evening to hear testimony on all matters to be considered by the House. For more information, contact the CSA office (650) 345-3020, (800) 345-3691, fax (650) 345-3269.

The deadline for submissions is May 1, 2008.