

The Making of an Annual Scientific Meeting Program

Joseph Dervay, M.D., M.P.H., MMS, FACEP, FAsMA, FUHM

Each year in preparation for our Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM), a scientific program and schedule of events is carefully crafted, serving as the *anchor* for our meeting. The program does not just magically appear but is the collective effort of a multitude of our dedicated AsMA members in conjunction with the Home Office.

So how does the program come to life?

The Scientific Program Committee (SPC) is responsible for the development and execution of the scientific program for each year's ASM. This is done in conjunction with the President, Executive Director (General Meeting Chair), and Home Office staff.

The President initially sets a theme for his/her year in office which is intended to offer a focus on an overarching theme for the meeting, guest speakers that may be invited, and any potential special events throughout the year. A review of surveys completed by the past year's ASM attendees provides insight into topic areas that members enjoyed and suggestions for additional emphasis.

A "Call for Papers" is then written and published on the AsMA website and in the August issue of the *Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance* journal. This announcement encourages authors to initiate their abstracts and provides guidance and direction on abstract submission into the electronic system.

We are all quite busy with our professional work and personal lives and, thus, it is of little surprise that historically the vast majority of abstracts are submitted "within 48 hours"

of the submission deadline of November 1st. Waiting until the last minute certainly creates a time crunch for a submitter to complete their abstract if anything goes awry with their use of the electronic submission system. For some authors, needing prior permission and review by an employer or institution in order to submit adds a layer of complexity. There are no waivers granted past the deadline submission date, so authors are encouraged to be proactive and timely during the process.

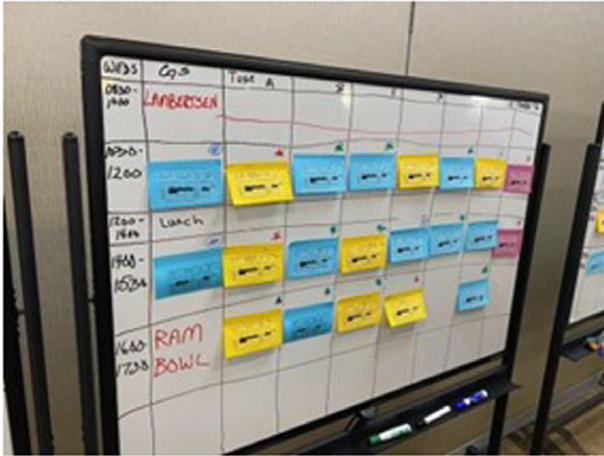
The annual SPC meeting is currently held in the days immediately following the mid-November Council meeting in Alexandria, VA, to review abstracts. The SPC is led by the Chair and Deputy Chair along with a Panel, Slide, and Poster Chair. Efforts are made to establish a Deputy for each of those three components in an attempt to create a succession plan as experience is gained. AsMA members are encouraged to volunteer and become part of the SPC and the abstract review process. The first day of the SPC meeting consists of blinded peer-review and scoring of submitted abstracts. Reviewers are assigned to tables in their area of expertise with other colleagues. Authors' names and institutions are removed from the abstract, so Reviewers are not made aware who submitted the abstract. In-person volunteer attendance has ranged from 40-80 members in past years. This has historically been an outstanding venue to discuss abstracts, provide mentorship to more junior AsMA members, and develop and renew collegial bonds in person. The abstracts are carefully reviewed, discussed thoroughly by table members, and assigned an overall grade. Those abstracts that are deemed not to fulfill the requirements of a viable abstract, based on acceptance criteria, are rejected with suggestions offered to the author to improve the abstract quality for a potential future submission. In recent years, as a result of the COVID Pandemic, abstracts have been reviewed in a hybrid manner consisting of remote and in-person participation. Although such a method of review has advantages and disadvantages, it has allowed participation for those unable to travel to the SPC meeting in person.



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CONTACT DETAILS:

Email: President@asma.org • **Web site:** www.asma.org • **Facebook:** Aerospace Medical Association • **Twitter:** @Aero_Med



During the second meeting day, the SPC Chair and leadership begin the process to arrange and schedule the accepted panels, sessions, and posters into an overall program for the 4-day ASM. This includes placing and balancing the panels and sessions into appropriate tracks, time slots, and various room sizes that are available for presentation. The display of posters has now moved to electronic, large television sized display screens, allowing presenters to interact with interested attendees and enhance the poster presentation material. This format has received excellent reviews in post-meeting surveys.

The collective effort and coordination to create the Annual Scientific Meeting program requires a substantial amount of work over many months by the SPC Chair and leadership team in concert with the Home Office. Dr. Eilis Boudreau serves as the Chair for the 2024 meeting and has done outstanding work with her team along with Rachel Trigg and Jeff Sventek at the Home Office. Dr. Boudreau is joined by Deputy Chair Amanda Lippert, Panel Chair Samir Alvi, Session Chair Douglas Boyd, Poster Chair Katie Samoil, and Remote Reviewer Chair Adam Sirek. This year a record 696 abstracts were submitted. As a comparison, we received 521 abstracts for the 2023 ASM in New Orleans, LA. Prior to her recent retirement from AsMA, Pam Day was involved with the abstract submission process and program development for 42 years. Pam, working closely with prior SPC Chairs over the years, worked hard to steadily improve the review process and is to be commended for helping develop excellent scientific programs. In past years, the amount of paper required each year for the printing of the hundreds of abstracts to be reviewed was *indeed a mountain*. Improved efficiencies in



electronic tracking programs developed in recent years has been very helpful for the SPC.

To all authors, thank you for your abstracts. It is incumbent upon all submitters to develop well-written and strong abstracts. Your efforts to do so help lay the foundation of a solid program. In an attempt to ensure higher levels of submitted abstracts, the Scientific Program Committee leadership will be providing additional guidance and information to the AsMA website for the submission cycle next year. This includes plans to create short video segments highlighting the features of well-written abstracts.

Many thanks to those who have ever served on the Scientific Program Committee albeit once or, as with some members, serving dozens of times over past decades. Those reviewer veterans have brought much wisdom and perspective to the process. I am personally grateful for the many years I have been able to participate with the SPC. As have so many of you, I always look forward to evaluating and discussing abstracts, interacting with newer members at their first review meeting, and engaging with longstanding AsMA colleagues. A number of years ago I had the opportunity of serving as the Scientific Program Chair for then AsMA President Richard Jennings. I can attest the role was a significant amount of work over many months, but for me *a true labor of love* to contribute to the process and see the scientific program come to fruition the following May.

I hope some of you may have the interest and ability to contribute to the Scientific Program Committee in the future and help create our Annual Scientific Meeting program.

All the best.

Keep 'em Flying...and Full Steam Ahead.