

94th Annual Scientific Meeting in Chicago: A Great Success

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The 2024 AsMA Annual Scientific Meeting at the Hyatt Regency Chicago was attended by a record 1750 attendees. The hotel was excellent and there were many things to do in addition to attending the meeting, with excellent restaurants, museums, and tourist opportunities nearby.

Unlike many organizations that have a single focus, AsMA is an association of associations, with 15 Constituent and 40 Affiliate organizations. We also have 18 Standing Committees that either mirror or consolidate the areas of interest of our Constituents and Affiliates. The Associations and Committees are like the spokes in a wheel. They keep AsMA as an organization stable and going in the right direction.

For me, the Annual Scientific Meeting has always started with the annual meeting of the International Airline Medical Association (IAMA), previously known as the Airline Medical Directors Association (AMDA). Its members include the medical directors and senior medical staff of most of the world's airlines. The IAMA meeting is open to everyone and the registration fee is nominal. CAMA Sunday is also inexpensive to attend in person and is available on demand, both with CME. This year, the topic of the CAMA meeting was Commercial Space Flight.

The AsMA Council, which is the governing body of our association, also meets on Sunday. As many of you know, our AsMA Executive Director, Jeff Sventek, will be retiring next year after 15 years of very capable management of our organization. At the Chicago meeting, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between AsMA and the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society (UHMS). Over the coming year, John Peters, UHMS

Executive Director, will work closely with Jeff Sventek to prepare for a joint AsMA/UHMS meeting in Atlanta, 1-6 June 2025, and on July 1, 2025, John Peters will become the Executive Director of AsMA in addition to continuing his work as Executive Director of UHMS. The two organizations together include over 4000 members and will continue to operate as separate entities under a single Executive Director. We believe that this will lead to more shared services between our organizations, and that it will be a spur to innovation and membership growth.

The scientific program was excellent, with over 500 oral and poster presentations. The scientific program is always the "meat" of our annual meeting and there was something for everyone, with topics varying from military and civilian aeromedical certification to commercial spaceflight operations and passenger screening to the always entertaining RAM Bowl. There were five astronauts among our keynote speakers this year, which I believe is a record. The Bauer lecture was delivered by Senator Harrison "Jack" Schmitt, geologist and scientist-astronaut, who flew on the Apollo 17 mission in December 1972, and was one of the last astronauts to have walked on the Moon. The Reinartz



Runners on the route for the Trumbo 5K Run/Walk.



Bauer lecturer Harrison Schmidt, Emily Vermeiren, Russ Rayman, and David Gradwell at the President's Reception.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3357/AMHP.957PP.2024>



Past Presidents from left to right: Susan Northrup, Valerie Martindale, Sarah Nunneley, and Marian Sides.

panel included Dr. Joe Kerwin, the first physician astronaut, who flew on Skylab in 1973 before the Space Shuttle missions began in 1981; astronaut Bob Cabana, who completed four Shuttle missions and was director of the Kennedy Space Center program from 2008 to 2021; astronaut and electrical engineer Joan Higginbotham, who was the third woman of color to go into space; and Dr. Serena Auñón-Chancellor, well known to many of us as the Director of the UTMB Galveston Aerospace Medicine Residency Program, who spent over 196 days on the ISS in 2018 and continues to support the ISS with respect to astronaut medical needs and medical research.

The Armstrong lecture was delivered by Dr. Lisa Kaltenegger, Director of the Carl Sagan Institute. She spoke about her work and her recent book, entitled *Alien Earths* (Saint Martin's press, 2024). We learned that scientists are now able to search for habitable worlds not only by studying radio waves, which started with the SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) project in 1984, but also by using the Hubble and James Webb telescopes to search for planets with biopigmentation and with atmospheric conditions likely to support life. Lisa stayed for some time after her presentation to speak with attendees and to personally sign copies of her book.

The receptions, lunches, and dinners were also enjoyable, with opportunities to both network with others and to hear presentations, such as one by Dr. Kris Belland on the TOPGUN aircraft carrier air wing mishap reduction program at the CAMA lunch. At the annual Fellows' meeting, Dr. Dan Van Syoc was elected as the new Fellows' Chair, succeeding Dr. Warren Silberman, who has been Chair for several years. Warren moves into the AsMA President-Elect position. Honors Night recognized our new class of Fellows in addition to honoring 21 awardees for their



Dr. Dervay, 2023-2024 AsMA President (second from the left), with the Galactics band members who played during the LSBEB reception.

contributions to science and to AsMA. The new Fellows and awardees are listed elsewhere in this issue of the Blue Journal. The meeting concluded with the traditional passing of the gavel from President Joe Dervay to incoming president Dr. Robert Orford. In my remarks, I recognized the excellent year our organization had with Joe as President and highlighted his leadership and communication skills.

One-third of the AsMA membership is international and we had an outstanding international attendance at the Chicago meeting. Like Chicago, Atlanta is a major airline hub, easily reachable from most countries. I look forward to working with our Executive Committee and Council and will see some of you at our annual Scientific Program Committee (SPC) meeting in Alexandria. The SPC, chaired this year by Amanda Lippert, is part of the "secret sauce" of our organization and I would encourage you to participate as virtual abstract reviewers, or to join us on site in Alexandria on November 14, 2024.

Thanks to all of you as Officers, Council and ExCom members, Committee, Constituent, and Affiliate Chairs and Presidents, our scientific session chairs, oral and poster presenters, and to you, our members. A special thanks also to those on the Registration Committee who staffed our Registration Desk, collected tickets, etc., our Corporate and Sustaining Members, our AsMA Executive Director Jeff Sventek, Deputy Executive Director Gisselle Vargas, and the Home Office staff based in Alexandria for a very successful Annual Scientific Meeting.

Our next AsMA Annual Scientific Meeting will be in Atlanta, June 1-6, 2024. The theme will be Innovation: Journey to the Future.

AsMA is a family. No one belongs here more than you!