

President's Page

2013 – New Challenges, New Opportunities

Happy New Year to All!

The beginning of a new year is always a good time for a brief reflection on the year just ended. Without a doubt, 2012 was a good year for our Association! For the first time in the past 5 years our revenues exceeded our expenses. The "Blue Journal", under the leadership and management of Fred Bonato and Pam Day, remains the premier Aerospace Medicine publication in the world! The staff has done an incredible job this year, especially their work on the new website. While truly a team effort, Rachel Trigg and Pam have done extraordinary work in launching this critical initiative. Rachel's efforts were so instrumental to the effort that her position was changed to reflect her increased responsibilities in this area. Our meeting in Atlanta was a great success, both in terms of attendance and the quality of the science presented. All told, a solid year!

While each year seems to bring new challenges, it also brings new opportunities. 2013 will be no different. One of the major focuses of the Executive Committee and Council is to explore new business models that will reduce the Association's current dependence on a single annual meeting to provide a significant portion of the annual revenues. The Annual Scientific Meeting produces 30-40% of AsMA's annual income. Our dependence on the annual meeting to generate revenue has long been recognized as a weakness in our business model, but events in recent years have brought the potential threat into sharp focus. The ability of our members to attend the annual meeting has been affected by events as diverse as the H1N1 outbreak in 2009 to the Icelandic volcano restricting air travel to and from Europe in 2010. The Anchorage meeting's "hiccup" was a change in federal per diem rates that would have led to significantly higher out-of-pocket expenses for all of our members employed by the federal government. While we currently have sufficient reserves to survive should the annual meeting be curtailed or cancelled, it would create a huge budget shortfall. This year's meeting in Chicago will be no different.

In a desire "to promote further efficiency and cost consciousness," the U.S. Office of Management and



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Budget (OMB) recently issued a memorandum establishing new requirements (restrictions) regarding travel and conference attendance by federal employees. That directive led to the Department of Defense to issue a memorandum imposing travel restrictions of such magnitude that the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS) cancelled their annual meeting scheduled for November. Obviously, it has the potential to significantly impact attendance by federal employees at the Chicago meeting. Much as he did when the Anchorage per diem issued appeared, our Executive Director quickly reached out to the senior leadership of our largest federal agency to develop a plan to gain the necessary clearances for our federal employees to be able to attend. We're keeping our fingers crossed.

This action has placed even more emphasis on AsMA's need to identify and develop other methods of delivering continuing education to our members. The Executive Committee is aggressively looking at other revenue sources to reduce our dependence on a single event for survival.

As reflected in the theme of Chicago's meeting—"Transforming Today's Challenges into Tomorrow's Opportunities"—AsMA faces challenges, but also has huge opportunities. I look forward to working with each of you as we continue to advance the science, and the art, of Aerospace Medicine for all who entrust themselves into our care.

Best wishes in this New Year.