

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2003

The 2003 AVAA Annual Meeting was held on October 12 at the venerable Empress of China Restaurant in the heart of San Francisco's historic Chinatown. I think it is safe to say that the meeting was historic in its own right since the number of attendees was approximately twice as large as any previous AVAA meeting.....nearly 75 guests, approximately 60-65 of them AVAA members with assorted spouses, guests and perhaps even a few gate crashers (heck, we were having so much fun we lost count...)! What excited me the most was how many young faces there were and how excited they were to be working in the VA! The food and libations were as expected for this landmark restaurant, superb and no one left hungry...The AVAA profusely thanks a "friendly and spontaneous consortium" of information technology companies (EKO, Drager, GE) for gracious unrestricted educational donations that helped support this event which is truly the cornerstone of the AVAA's mission.

As the plates were cleared the business began and an impressive meeting it was. In the comfortable surroundings (seems like the first year in quite a long time we had ample space to move around!), the vitally important interchange of ideas from the multitude of VAMC's represented really "started to flow" following my intro presentation (mostly light hearted jabs at our new governor elect "the Terminator" but laced with pleas for our members to get involved, stay involved, urge any of their new colleagues to join, and for heaven sakes, please take full advantage of our rapidly growing and easier to use web site)! The presentation is posted in the Annual Meeting Minutes section for registered members to see. Coupled with the appropriate catalyst from our own National Anesthesia Service director, Mike Bishop and his trusty and talented side kick Doug Rotter ...the meeting heated up as we covered a range of topics important to any and all VA Anesthesiologists starting with the pending physician pay bill and its ramifications, information about physician hours and documentation and other topics (also in the Annual Meeting Minutes page for registered members to view).

Adding presentations from our immediate past president , the unflappable Al Perrino from West Haven on the important and controversial state/military-VA component society issue and the timeless Bill Schmeling from Milwaukee (hey , if you don't believe me just look at that baby face in the "Report from the Field Advisory Committee" section) on the billing issue and important computer interface software issues which are of particular importance to us and the corporate community involved in anesthesia record keepers and integrated perioperative information systems. We have all the details of these discussion on our meeting minutes page shortly as soon as our trusty secretary/treasurer Grace Chien from Portland finishes typing that long document!

AVAA is growing rapidly and we're making lots of changes behind the scenes to keep up (members will hearing about this soon)....we've found a new mission as our former emphasis on supporting the establishment of a strong NAS which has come to fruition (keep up the great work Mike!). We are defining ourselves as a true advocacy and educational organization for the talented and hardworking Anesthesiologists of the VA. I'm very optimistic about our future and foresee strong advances on multiple fronts including research! With the upcoming publication of our perioperative beta blockade survey in the February 2004 issue of the Journal of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Anesthesia (performed in collaboration with the Association of VA Surgeons) we are entering that realm and others in the organization are already active through the AVAA!

Finally, just as I ended my update earlier this year just as the Iraq war had begun, many brave servicemen and women are still at great risk and many have perished in the line of duty. Needless to say words can't express the loss and sacrifice on the part of these brave individuals and their families.

Although we are not directly involved in delivering health care to our active armed forces members, all of us in AVAA strive to bring the best health care possible to veterans after their term of service. We will continue to advocate for the highest standards of health care and the ability to attract and retain well trained anesthesiologists and support staff. That's what it's all about!

Stayed tuned to your email box and to this page for further updates and I'm already looking forward to seeing all of you and lots new faces in Las Vegas at the 2004 ASA meeting!

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