

Letter from the ASNR President

As introduced by Dr. John Hesselink, ASNR 2009-2010 President, at the Annual Business Meeting in Boston in May, the ASNR is embarking on a new strategic plan to guide our Society through the next three to five years. The strategic planning team, led by Dr. Glenn Forbes (ASNR President 1993-1994), was charged by Dr. Hesselink and assisted by Lifton Associates. Many ASNR members were included in the process, including team leaders Drs. William Dillon, David Hackney, James Provenzale, Patrick Turski, and Robert Zimmerman.

Summary of Strategic Themes and Goals

Strategic Theme 1: ASNR'S Composition and Relationship to Other Societies

1. (Re)position ASNR and neuroradiology at the center of neuroimaging (nationally and internationally)
2. Strengthen ties between ASNR and organizations more directly involved in research and new applications of neuroimaging
3. Review membership priorities and recruitment approaches to support Goals 1 and 2

Strategic Theme 2: Health-Care Policy and Economics

4. To the greatest extent possible, maintain alignment between the ASNR Clinical Practice Committee (CPS) and the American College of Radiology (ACR) Commissions
5. Support evidence-based medicine and comparative effectiveness/outcomes research
6. Pursue other relationships and initiatives that increase ASNR's profile

Strategic Theme 3: ASNR's Role in Sponsoring Research

7. Demonstrate the value of ASNR's support for research so that all Society members are committed to ASNR-sponsored research as a core activity of the organization
8. Broaden input to decisions regarding criteria for research awards as well as the evaluation of proposals and funding decisions
9. Develop a sustainable structure for ASNR-sponsored research

Strategic Theme 4: ASNR's Role in Continuing Education

10. Maintain Annual Meeting attendance and attendee satisfaction at 2010 levels, while working to enhance remote/electronic meeting offerings and distribution

Strategic Theme 5: Leadership Development and Support for Fellows in Training

11. Recruit all eligible neuroradiology fellows-in-training and recent graduates to become members of ASNR
12. Identify and support the development of up-and-coming ASNR leaders

At the close of ASNR 2010 in Boston, the ASNR Executive Committee voted unanimously to adopt a new mission statement of our Society:

Mission Statement

The American Society of Neuroradiology is an organization of neuroradiologists and related professionals, dedicated to maximizing the benefits of neuroradiology to patients by promoting the highest standards for training and practice, and fostering research in the field.

Although the values given voice by this statement are embedded in the Society’s constitution, a concise, shared statement of purpose has been previously lacking. This “patient-centric” statement is intended to unify our membership with greater clarity of purpose. It is also a means to emphasize the focus of our activities and preeminence in neuroradiology to those outside of our field.

We also have adopted a new vision statement that inspired the development of our strategic plan and will serve to guide it – and us – forward:

Vision Statement

The American Society of Neuroradiology will be internationally recognized for promoting the highest quality in patient care, education, and research involving diagnostic and therapeutic imaging for diseases of the brain, head and neck, and spine.

While these are not the only areas that the society will focus on over the next five years, the strategic plan identifies five key themes and associated interrelated priority goals that are both timely and relevant to the continued success of the ASNR:

1. ASNR’s composition and relationship to other societies
2. Health-care policy and economics
3. ASNR’s role in sponsoring research
4. ASNR’s role in conducting and sponsoring continuing education
5. Leadership development and support for fellows-in-training

Strategic Theme 1: ASNR’s Composition and Relationship to Other Societies

The ASNR was founded in 1962 by and for fellowship-trained neuroradiologists in the United States. Since then neuroradiology has undergone changes in training and certification, seen the involvement of professionals other than neuroradiologists in neuroimaging, and has experienced dramatic advances in the science and application of neuroimaging. Although the Society’s core membership continues to be fellowship-trained neuroradiologists, the ASNR has expanded to include non-U.S. physicians and non-physician professionals (e.g., MR scientists), who contribute substantially to the field.

In recent years, we also have come to examine our relationship with other radiology and

imaging societies. While other fields tend to be represented by few professional organizations, radiology has more than 40 societies. Over the past few years, we have witnessed important alliances and even mergers among some [e.g., merger of the American College of Radiology (ACR) and American Roentgen Ray Society (ARRS)]. Our own close relationship with the ACR via representation on its Board of Chancellors through the Neuroradiology Commission is vitally important at a time when the ACR's strengths in government relations and advocacy are crucial.

It is essential that we build these relationships with ASNR seen as a strong representative of the eyes and voice of neuroradiology.

At the 2010 ASNR Annual Meeting in Boston, we launched, with great success, the first technical symposium in collaboration with the ISMRM. The theme of the meeting, "Stay Connected", referred in part to our affiliated subspecialty societies (ASSR, ASPNR, ASHNR, ASFNR and SNIS) and their linkages to the ASNR for strength of purpose.

As we make further progress in the work of theme 1, our overarching goals will be to:

1. (Re)position ASNR and neuroradiology at the center of neuroimaging (nationally and internationally)
2. Strengthen ties between ASNR and organizations more directly involved in research and new applications of neuroimaging
3. Review membership priorities and recruitment approaches to support Goals 1 and 2

Strategic Theme 2: Health-Care Policy and Economics

This is a most challenging time (perhaps the most challenging time we have faced), given the interactive effects of a global recession, health-care reform legislation of unprecedented extent, and strong public focus on both imaging utilization and an FDA investigation on radiation exposure from medical imaging. In some areas of the country, there are many more graduating fellows than jobs.

Through the work of our Clinical Practice Committee (CPC), which has increasingly aligned with the leveraging power of the ACR, ASNR has been active in the arena of health-care policy and economics for the past nearly two decades. The CPC, ably led by Dr. Turski over the past several years, serves to:

- Collaborate with other entities on issues pertinent to neuroradiology practice
- Represent neuroradiology in an advisory capacity to the American Medical Association (AMA) (e.g., on the CPT editorial panel)
- Develop and advance new neuroradiology CPT codes
- Participate in payer coverage policy efforts, providing input as new policies are proposed
- Monitor positions on the ACR Neuroradiology Commission and other commissions and committees, providing ASNR representatives as appropriate, and exploring quality and appropriateness issues and their

- impact on neuroradiology
- Provide input into practice guidelines and technical standards, training standards, and any other position papers influencing the practice of neuroradiology
 - Keep the ASNR Executive Committee and Research Committee apprised of reimbursement issues
 - Consult with the ASNR Research Committee and Neuroradiology Education and Research Foundation (NER Foundation) to solicit input regarding research directions and projects related to socioeconomic issues

Moving forward, additional goals of the society within this theme area are:

1. To the greatest extent possible, maintain alignment between the ASNR CPC and the ACR Commissions. This liaison will continue to be important, particularly over the coming several years of reorganization within a new healthcare delivery paradigm.
2. To support evidence-based medicine and comparative effectiveness/outcomes research. Such efforts inform practice guidelines and coverage decisions, and are critical to demonstrating the value and cost-effectiveness of imaging and justifying its appropriate utilization.
3. To pursue other relationships and initiatives that increase ASNR's profile (among those making policy decisions, both in Washington and regionally)

Strategic Theme 3: ASNR's Role in Sponsoring Research

ASNR, in its constitution, states its intention "to foster research in neuroradiology." Through the Neuroradiology Education and Research Foundation (NER Foundation), ASNR provides financial support both to expand the base of clinical knowledge and to nurture the careers of young professionals. In a recent past online member survey, 59.9% (of 418 respondents) felt that research should be one of the Society's core activities, while less than 6% felt it should not be a focus of ASNR. A large majority (83%) of all respondents had at least some awareness of ASNR-sponsored research.*

Through the ASNR Research Committee, the NER Foundation currently sponsors two awards: (1) the Scholar Award in Neuroradiology Research, for investigators in the early phase of their careers, and (2) a Basic Science Research Award. The ASNR is developing a new award in Comparative Effectiveness Research in Neuroradiology, targeted to projects that assess the impact of specific imaging and interventional techniques on patient outcomes.

The ubiquitous decline in vendor support for the activities of professional societies due to a combination of effects of the recent economic recession and more stringent conflict-

* Respondents were approximately evenly distributed between community-based and academic practice settings.

of-interest restrictions has posed a challenge to ASNR in funding our research mission. Further, member support of the NER Foundation remains limited. As a consequence, the number and size of ASNR's research awards have been reduced in recent years.

In order to maintain and grow our commitment to our research mission, we focus on three main goals:

1. Demonstrate the value of ASNR's support for research so that all Society members are committed to ASNR-sponsored research as a core activity of the organization. For example, continue to showcase the work of our grant awardees at the Annual Meeting and beyond.
2. Broaden input to decisions regarding criteria for research awards as well as the evaluation of proposals and funding decisions. This may be achieved through surveys, continued ASNR conference sessions on NER Foundation funding (began in 2010), discussion at business meetings, and examining membership of the Research Committee to ensure broad representation.
3. Develop a sustainable structure for ASNR-sponsored research. This may include launching a new giving campaign for the NER Foundation or realignment of the Society's overall approach to fund-raising.

Strategic Theme 4: ASNR's Role in Continuing Education

We are challenged to remain current with advances in our field, both to maintain contemporary clinical practice and to meet certification requirements reflecting those advances. Beyond clinical expertise, neuroradiologists increasingly need the knowledge and expertise to allow them to function as members of a health-care team.

Approximately 1,700 individuals attended the ASNR Annual Meeting in 2010, where the content included presentations on scientific research and new imaging tools, reviews of clinical aspects of neuroradiology, and scientific posters and exhibits. Case presentations were popular with individuals preparing for maintenance of certification (MOC) exams, and those sessions on advanced imaging techniques (e.g. perfusion imaging, fMRI, and DTI) are becoming increasingly sought after. At the 2010 Annual Meeting, there was an enhanced emphasis on socioeconomic programming, including health-care policy and practice management issues. Programming by subspecialty societies was robust.

Our annual ASNR meeting, as well as subspecialty and regional meetings, offers a combination of review lectures and scientific presentations in a relaxed atmosphere that allows for interaction between speakers and attendees. (The 2010 Boston meeting was particularly interactive, with numerous extended question-and-answer periods.)

The other major venue through which ASNR provides continuing education for its members is via print and electronic media. Presentations at the annual meeting are captured and provided to members free of charge, albeit there is a delay in posting these presentations. The American Journal of Neuroradiology (AJNR), under the superb leadership of Editor-in-Chief Mauricio Castillo, MD, has begun to produce web-based

material including special collections on specific topics and podcasts.

Clearly the means by which the Society delivers CME must continue to evolve and offer increasing options, particularly for our junior colleagues and scientist and international members. By way of example, should social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) be used to deliver content and enhance interactions among neuroradiologists? Should we consider podcasts or live streaming from the annual meeting? Overall, how can ASNR strike a balance between the value of the annual meeting model and the use of electronic media for self-learning?

Related issues within this strategic theme are how we can best help ensure that our CME offerings help members both enhance their knowledge and skill base and fulfill MOC requirements. While ASNR has been a leader in providing members with the tools necessary to achieve MOC, there remains confusion among members as to how to execute and collect data on the practice quality improvement (PQI) project requirement.

The single two-part goal for this theme, which will be executed through close interaction with the Education Committee and Program Committee, is:

To maintain annual meeting attendance and attendee satisfaction at 2010 levels, while working to enhance remote/electronic meeting offerings and distribution

Strategic Theme 5: Leadership Development and Support for Fellows in Training

ASNR's success over the 48 years of its existence has relied on the quality and commitment of its leaders, volunteers, and staff. ASNR volunteers board and committee members serve on task forces and work groups, as well as representatives to other organizations. Fostering the next generation of leaders will be key to the ASNR's continued ability to serve the profession and maintain prominence in neuroradiology. In order to accomplish this, we must connect with potential members early in their careers, demonstrate the value of the organization to them and to the profession, and support and mentor these younger members as they move into leadership positions.

Radiologists are faced with increasing demands to devote their time to clinical (i.e., revenue-generating) activities. As a consequence, they have less time for Society involvement and similar activities. Many younger potential members may not see the ASNR as being relevant to them and their practice. Approximately 240 potential new members finish their neuroradiology fellowship in the United States each year. With the upcoming 2013 changes in the structure of the diagnostic radiology residency, residents will be potentially choosing and starting to subspecialize prior to formal fellowships. We must reach out to these new members on their timetable, not ours, and ensure that we are meeting their needs for professional support.

Over recent years, fellow members have been incorporated into every major ASNR committee, including the Executive Committee. A resolution to lower the career stage of membership to include radiology residents of any level was adopted at the May 2010 meeting of the Executive Committee. Further a Young Professionals Committee has

been proposed to ensure the input of new and more junior members in the direction and administration of the Society.

Two main goals will be pursued within Strategic Theme 5:

1. Recruit all eligible neuroradiology fellows-in-training and recent graduates to become members of ASNR
2. Identify and support the development of “up and coming” ASNR leaders

Next Steps will include implementing strategies across the domains of clinical practice, education and research to lead the ASNR forward with integrity. If we are to sustain our success, we must be ready and willing to change and grow.