

Strategic Issue 2: Demonstrating the value of ASNR to members and potential members

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Introduction

The ASNR has provided extraordinary value to its members since its inception, including the broad categories of education (annual meetings, MOC materials, on-line journals and programs and print media), socioeconomic advocacy, practice development, research support through the Foundation and activities provided through its Publications department including AJNR and Neurographics. While this is still the case, members and prospective members have increasing financial constraints including the capping of personal and/or practice educational funds. At the same time, the expense profile for attending scientific meetings and paying society dues has not significantly decreased, and there are many options for them to spend these limited dollars (RSNA, SNIS, ARRS, ASHNR, ASFNR, ASPNR, ASSR, etc). This bind has led some to more carefully question the value (benefit/cost ratio) of their ASNR membership and involvement in its annual meeting. It therefore behooves the leadership of the society to examine methods to better demonstrate its value and promote it, and at the same time reduce costs, within reason.

Exploring the issues

A member survey (results and comments in Appendix) was conducted exploring issues related to membership perception of the value of the ASNR, particularly as related to costs to members for society membership and the annual meeting. Data from a prior survey focusing strictly on the annual meeting was also reviewed and incorporated. Suggestions made at the society's retreat were also reviewed and considered.

1. **Meeting Structure and cost.** For many years, there has been a debate concerning the relative value of basic scientific and clinically directed programming at the annual meeting, as well as the balance of science and practical information delivered in the AJNR. As far as the meeting, some, particularly those in non-academic practices, find basic science presentations to be arcane, while those seeking basic discovery find the CME-like clinical material less attractive. In fact, both aspects of our specialty portfolio are important, and efforts have been made to maintain a balance. This programming balance at the meeting has varied with the program chair and may change significantly from year to year. Along these lines, at next year's annual meeting, Gordon Sze is developing parallel Symposia, with programming targeting clinically oriented and more basic science oriented material to attract both segments of our membership. The society could also consider additional new ways to create a structured and more repeatable balance at the meeting that members would perceive as attractive and as increased value.

While it is not within the scope of this sub-committee to determine the methods employed for cost reduction, and possible methods to reduce member expenses (Appendix) this is needed, and the dissemination of information to the membership regarding these efforts is equally important. Possible strategies for reducing meeting costs for attendees are required to improve the value proposition. This could include planning annual meetings in conjunction with other societies with associated cost share to reduce expenses for the participating organizations and their members, which would also enable attendance at more than one meeting for the same travel costs. The possibility of holding joint meetings, and even the structural integration of some like societies, was explored at a recent meeting

of the Intersociety Commission organized by the ACR. An ACR website is now up and running to facilitate these efforts. As an initial pilot, the ASNR has begun to collaborate with the ACR to plan the Neuroradiology program at the ACR meeting. Short of these measures, member's responses to our survey suggest that a shorter annual meeting would be acceptable to many (Appendix) and help to achieve these goals. Other member comments indicate support for selecting more central locations for the meetings, to reduce travel time and costs, and increase leverage for bargaining with sites.

Action: Create a free standing committee that structures the content of the annual meeting in parallel with the specific interests of the President-elect who also serves as Chair of the annual meeting, similar to what RSNA and ARRS do. This committee or a second should re-examine options for more central and economical meeting sites, and also consider jointly locating the annual meeting with other society and/or sub-society meetings. It may be worth dedicating an appointed position on the executive committee and a staff member to monitor these efforts and create messaging (Director of value engineering) in conjunction with the Treasurer and staff.

2. **AJNR Content.** The AJNR editor also tries to maintain a content balance. While the journal focuses on research driven papers, the journal also contains a variety of content. Examples include the placement of two to three reviews per issue, a series of vignettes, and a "clinical practice" and "methodology" series. The AJNR editor has also done an excellent job in developing podcasts, a fellow's journal club and monthly editor/fellows choices and interviews. CME is only offered by the more recently developed Neurographics, which also publishes review articles, case reports and pictorial essays. The recent addition of CME-type articles in the journal RADIOLOGY suggests that this may also be an option for AJNR, especially considering the recent survey, that suggests a key value of ASNR/AJNR is providing educational materials that support the members in meeting MOC requirements (See appendix A, results and comments from survey). An increased number of podcasts may be desirable, although this is difficult and dependent on the volunteer efforts of authors.

Action: Considering the overwhelming call for support for supporting members in meeting MOC requirements for SA-CME, the AJNR editor should consider providing content that can be used for self-assessment CME credits, not only in Neurographics but also in the AJNR if deemed appropriate.

3. **On-line meeting delivery and educational materials.** Challenges the ASNR faces include adjusting the scale of the annual meeting to handle more content, including cognitive imaging, PET/MR and developing functional techniques. It seems inevitable that more online content is required. A very large number of survey comments (Appendix A) demonstrated members desire to have increased access to educational materials on-line. Suggestions included ideas to reduce meeting expense by providing web-based access to electronic exhibits instead of having these physically present at the meeting. Providing meeting content electronically, either prior to or after the meeting for a fixed period of time is desirable. A strategy to alter the delivery of meeting content to permit partial or complete virtual attendance could save members the costs of travel, and replace the cost of meeting registration with lower fees. This might attract attendees who do not travel to the meeting for a variety of reasons, and could actually increase the perception of value. The costs of capturing the material, or transmitting in real time, are a difficult consideration. As background, the ASNR has recently begun to explore virtual meeting capture and delivery.

ASNR leadership is in the process of pilot testing this activity. Last year two lectures were streamed, with a very modest number of people logging in to watch them at considerable cost (20K). Current pilot plans included streaming 4 lectures this year and 6 the year after in Chicago, with a small fee. After these 3 years, the plan has been to evaluate the data and determine if it is worth increasing this effort.

Another area of active work at the ASNR is the development of the “Neuro Curriculum Live” concept, initially funded by a \$100K grant from Bracco. Initially developed by Howard Rowley and the Education Committee, Doug Philips now leads a subcommittee charged with organizing content and generating short, clinically oriented lectures and other educational materials primarily targeting medical student, residents and fellows. This is a very promising development, and these materials could then be linked under a “one-stop shopping” website that could also include access to all ASNR on-line content in an integrated fashion, possibly an “ASNR Education Academy” that could become a “go-to” site for members. Free content could be offered, and supplemented by more complex and detailed pay as you go content. A model suggested by one committee member is the Khan Academy (<http://www.khanacademy.org>), a general site that has a large international following.

Action: Virtual meetings and e-delivery of meeting material and content, as well as increasing e-CME materials (especially those that qualify for SA-CME credit) are a critically important part of our future and will provide increased value for members. This could increase access to our educational materials for the 2/3 of our membership who do not attend the annual meeting each year, and secure membership ranks. We suggest that the Society fund an exploration committee charged with developing a technical and financial white paper for moving this forward. This group should consult with RSNA and perhaps other societies about their experiences, and consider joint contracting for these services with a goal of finding a manageable cost structure, and then task the central office in developing the infrastructure required. The development of a “one-stop-shopping site, that also could include the materials under development currently, such as “Neuro Curriculum Live,” should be the objective.

4. **Reducing cost of the annual meeting for membership.** The cost of the annual meeting continues to escalate at a time when corporate funding is decreasing dramatically and practice compensation for members is dropping, given shifts in reimbursement for imaging services. The job market for neuroradiologists is at a ten year low according to the most recent SCARD survey. As value=benefit/cost, it is important for the society leadership to find ways to reduce the cost of the meeting and society operations to increase value, through passing on a portion of these savings to reduce the cost of participating for members and prospective members.

Action: Specific cost reduction options have been identified by the Cost Reduction and the Annual Meeting task forces. We suggest that these be examined and incorporated into ASNR’s long term planning. Also refer to Appendix.

5. **Transparency.** Perception and reality often merge in the mind of the observer, when in fact they may differ significantly in reality. The Society has in past “good” years run significant budget surpluses that have not always been used to reduce member costs. Reserve funds have been built, and at times used to fund important other priorities including research. At

the least, maximizing transparency in Society economics is needed to assure the membership that their dues money is necessary and well spent. Few members attend the annual business meeting where this is discussed, and some find it hard to interpret financial statements. New strategies to clearly and continually lay out this information may be needed to inform members and gain their support. A concerted effort should be made to transmit in clear language, easily understandable by all, the information contained in the society's financial statements. Plans for the use of society reserves should also be outlined in the same fashion. The objective would be to prove that the society is efficient in the use of the funds entrusted to it.

Action: We suggest creating a webpage and other communication methods that can be consistently used by the president and the administrative and executive committees to provide content to keep the membership up to date on important financial information and other key society activities. The Foundation should do the same.

6. **Better demonstrating society efforts on behalf of the members.** There are considerable advocacy efforts that are ongoing within the society, including in socioeconomics in lock-step with the ACR Commission that include the development of practice guidelines, involvement in the reimbursement advocacy, lobbying, etc. Concerning the move from pay-for-volume to pay for value, members also need support from ASNR in developing strategies to survive and prosper in the new paradigm. Educational content and perhaps a list-serve dedicated to advantaging Neuroradiology within Accountable Care Organizations and in optimizing reimbursement for imaging services within systems working with capitated or bundled payment scenarios would help further demonstrate value of the ASNR efforts. Methods of communication of these efforts are equally important. This, as well as the effective promotion of educational resources, need review, including the improved use of social media such as blogs, Twitter and Facebook, as well as optimizing the use of global email notices. This could include an analysis of marketing.

Action: The executive committee should further develop the involvement of the ASNR, in collaboration with ACR, in socioeconomic activities, the production and delivery of related educational materials and the dissemination of these materials to membership, including an integrated and coordinated website/webpage for this purpose. These efforts could also be linked to the joint promotion of leadership and business education for members, as currently afforded by the Radiology Leadership Institute (RLI) (ACR/Kellogg), the Academy of Radiology Leadership and Management (ALRM) (RSNA/AUR/ARRS/SCARD) (radleaders.org) and other like efforts by the RSNA and other societies.

Appendix

Strategic Issue #2: Survey results summary and member comments (number of individual members commenting in brackets)

Annual meeting and on-line educational materials

1. Consider limiting sites to central US venues (Dallas, Chicago), and less expensive venues (it is a meeting not a vacation). (Salt Lake City also used as example held the ISMRM recently). (20)
2. Shorten the meeting by one day (10)
3. Intense member interest in on-line access to meeting and CME materials, SAMs/MOC. (30). Interest in more emphasis on on-line e-learning and less on annual meeting. Improve or develop on-line access to meeting content, prior to, during and after the meeting. Specific suggestions:
 - a. Allow on-line access for registrants for a year after each meeting.
 - b. Stream/Podcast meeting
 - c. Record and charge for CME credit, entire virtual meeting could be marketed.
 - d. Create electronic archives of recent meetings available on-line for CME.
 - e. On-line access to electronic exhibits may be enough to eliminate having a site for them at the meeting, and is highly desirable at the meeting and after it. In any case, little time to view at the meeting.
 - f. "The cost and specific time/ travel commitment to attend a meeting in order to stay current and obtain required SA-CME are less necessary today in the world of electronic CME. Electronic/DVD access to timely educational offerings. This is far less costly, can be tailored to fit the user's time and availability preferences, and more easily meets specific requirements needed for licensure, modality specific SAMs, etc. Timely CME on-line or per DVD from ASNR could allow those of us who can't get free from practice demands to benefit from our membership if carefully done and proofed. Current offerings for CME via ASNR website are disappointing, with glitches in IT access, poorly written post tests, etc. which aren't reviewed or corrected. Other more professional on line and/or DVD CME products are readily available, and provide better use of limited \$.
 - g. I was really disappointed that the meeting material is not available in some form of digital media. I would feel much better about the annual meeting and membership costs if I had a digital copy of the material to refer to after the meeting. The meeting is so jam packed with such high quality information it is literally impossible to remember all the details after a week. At the end of the meeting week there is very little to show for all of the cost incurred going to the meeting."

AJNR

1. Charge for receiving print version. (Note: The AJNR already discounts the electronic version.)
2. Goal of eliminating the printed version, provide on-line access only
3. Allow download of entire AJNR so that it can be read off-line without WiFi on tablet, and still allow individual article downloads.
4. Consider providing CME-SA credits for selected articles in AJNR – increasingly important considering member interest in ASNR support for MOC support.
5. Reduce ASNR dues for those opting out of print journal.

Meeting cost reduction suggestions, assuming savings at least in part may be applies to reduced registration fees:

1. Reduce availability of food, except for coffee. (40) RSNA was used as example.
 - a. Most would eliminate lunch (many feel boxed lunches are bad), as long as decent food was available at the venue or immediately adjacent.
 - b. Some felt eliminating breakfast would also be acceptable, can get it at hotel, per RSNA. (8)
 - c. Reduce food at committee meetings
2. Eliminate computer terminals; provide free-WiFi for attendees to check email, record CME, audience response, etc.
3. No need for printed material at all; provide jump drive with syllabus, PDF of lecture outlines - but must insure all electronic forms are tablet optimized. (13)
4. No need for meeting carry bag (12)
5. Reduce support for invited speakers, executive staff and past-presidents to attend the annual meeting. (5)
6. Reduce or eliminate evening events, or charge for them. (9) Too many people anyway. All social events could be pay as you go.

Comments to preserve the current state of meeting:

1. The ASNR experience is unique and a reason to attend. If too many services are stripped out, it will simply compete with other meetings
2. Have seen lots of changes, increasing cuts over past 30 years. I think meetings are excellent and any further cuts would affect participation
3. Services already cut. Try and maintain. Otherwise lose further attendance
4. Would rather pay more than reduce services

Priorities for applying cost savings to reduce individual expenses.

Reduce registration fees for all: 41.2%

Reduce dues for all: 38%.

Reduce registration for young professionals (YP) and members in training (MIT): 27%

Reduce dues for YP only: 20%

Apply savings to research: 9.9

Relevant comments:

1. Give loyalty member dues discount at 5, 10 & 15 years
2. Reduce annual meeting registration fees for young professionals (within 3 years from fellowship training), and members in training
3. Would place members in training in a different category price wise, while keeping young pros. in same category as all members
4. Reduce fees for active members above 65.