

TRENDS

Association of
Schools of
Allied Health
Professions

HIGHLIGHTS

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FORWARD MOVEMENT IN ALLIED HEALTH GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Two important and related events occurred in Washington during the week of February 9 that represent significant improvement in the potential that allied health professionals have for influencing federal policy in the health arena. As part of the Association's *2003 Winter Meeting*, approximately 70 ASAHP members visited Capitol Hill to talk with elected officials and legislative staff in both chambers about the necessity of passing an allied health reinvestment act as a means of dealing with serious workforce problems.

Although a bill has not yet been introduced, these visits were of great importance. The information that was obtained will be incorporated into the draft that is ready to be converted to its final iteration before it is sent to the legislative counsel's office on the Hill. Just as importantly, potential sponsors and co-sponsors were identified. Comments made by Winter Meeting attendees and the advice they were given by legislative staff will be shared with partner organizations that are involved in crafting the bill.

Another noteworthy event occurred earlier in the week when the Board of Directors agreed to contract the services of Capitol Associates, Inc. to assist in the overall legislative effort that is about to be launched. A Washington-based firm, Capitol Associates is widely recognized for its achievements in working effectively with legislators and federal agency officials.

Established 20 years ago, the staff of this organization played a key role in the creation of the National Institute of Nursing Research. Another specialized activity is working in the area of appropriations for programs administered by the U.S. Public Health Service. The staff person who will provide assistance is Bill Finerfrock, Vice President for Health Policy.

In addition to acquiring eight years of experience working for two United States Senators, he formerly was the chief lobbyist for the American Academy of Physician Assistants. He also was a co-founder and executive director of the National Association of Rural Health Clinics. He and his associates will work closely with ASAHP staff in identifying the key steps that will be taken to have the proposed bill move forward through the legislative process leading to the enactment stage.



VANGUARD OF
ALLIED HEALTH EDUCATION

Trends is the official newsletter of the Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions (Suite 500, 1730 M St. NW, Washington, D.C., 20036, 202-293-4848) Trends is published monthly and available as a service to Association members. Annual subscriptions are available to nonmembers for \$55. For more information and/or subscriptions, contact the editor, Thomas W. Elwood, Dr.PH.



PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

By David D. Gale, ASAHP President



The April 2, 1953 issue of the journal *Nature* contained an article that represents a milestone in the history of science. Written by the American James Watson and his British colleague Francis Crick, this item was only 867 words in length. Unlike much of the hype that is associated with most developments which occur today, however, their paper is characterized to an exceptional degree by its understated assertions.

Their opening words are as follows, “We wish to suggest a structure for the salt of deoxyribose nucleic acid (D.N.A.). This structure has novel features which are of considerable biological interest.” Toward the end of the article, they state, “It has not escaped our notice that the specific pairing we have postulated immediately suggests a possible copying mechanism for the genetic material.” Simple words expressed in a clear prose style, they provided the foundation for the genomics revolution that lay ahead.

Prior to the recent sequencing of the human genome, genetics played a relatively small role in health care. Traditionally, the emphasis was on relatively rare conditions involving an extra or missing chromosome or part of a chromosome as in the case of Down’s Syndrome. Only a limited group of specialists in tertiary care centers provided the bulk of the treatment for such conditions. Currently, thousands of distinct genetic disorders have been identified and the focus has been expanded to include polygenic disorders such as diabetes and cardiovascular conditions in which different genes may be implicated. One or more genes are involved in at least nine of the 10 leading causes of mortality in the United States.

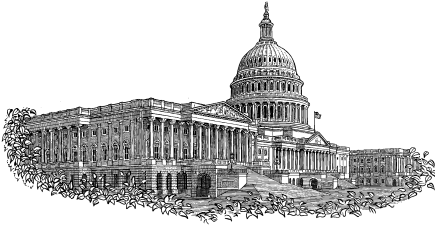
Apart from the scientific basis of the relationship between genes and health status, a great many ethical, legal, and social issues must be resolved. As an example, the question of who should have access to genetic information is extremely important since, among other things, the ability to obtain insurance and be selected for employment could be affected.

Given the amount of publicity generated by the topic of genomics, all health professionals may be placed in the position of being asked to field questions about genetic tests and disease risks. Core competencies have been developed and arranged into the broad areas of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Not all health professionals will need to be grounded in all 44 competencies, but they all certainly should have an understanding of the nature of the scientific revolution unfolding before them. Many professions are off to a promising start in this regard, but overall, allied health is not among them. Consequently, we need to do more to achieve a visible presence in the eyes of the federal officials whose role it is to move genomics from the laboratory to the diagnostic and treatment domains.

Another article in this issue of TRENDS describes what will occur in Washington in April to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Watson and Crick article. Allied health professionals are encouraged to attend these events or to consider how to highlight this important anniversary on their respective campuses.



YEAR-LONG CONTINUING RESOLUTION AVERTED



As month after month in fiscal year 2003 passed without Congress approving 11 non-defense appropriations bills that must be completed annually, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Ted Stevens (R-AK) indicated that he supported passage of a long-term continuing resolution (CR) that would enable the government to continue functioning until the end of the fiscal year on September 30. Since October 1 of last year, it has taken 12 short-term CRs to enable many federal agencies to remain operational at funding levels that were established for the previous fiscal year.

Depending on which agency or program was involved, the situation appeared either beneficial or disastrous. For example, in his budget proposal President Bush recommended that no money be spent for all but two programs under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act. The *Section 755 Allied Health Grants Program* falls under Title VII. A CR for the rest of fiscal year 2003 looked attractive in that light. Other agencies, such as the components of the National Institutes of Health, viewed the matter from a more threatened standpoint. Lacking specific amounts of money to spend, it was not possible to know how many new and continuation projects could be funded.

The prospect of not having new appropriations legislation appeared to jump-start a process that had been mired in both controversy and inertia. Almost overnight, legislators in both chambers swung into action. Agreements were reached and the news is good for Title VII programs. The legislation is expected to be signed into law during the week of February 16. Once enacted, spending for health professions education programs under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act will increase from \$295,111,000 in fiscal year 2002 to \$310,459,000 for the current fiscal year. The Section 755 Program would increase from \$9,495,000 to \$12,000,000.

TWENTY YEARS AGO IN TRENDS

A series of six regional *Interprofessional Health Leadership Symposia* was inaugurated in December 1982 with a meeting in Houston, TX. Funded by the Kellogg foundation, the event was co-hosted by ASAHP. Approximately 80 new projects were launched as a result of the symposium.

TEN YEARS AGO IN TRENDS

Members of ASAHP's Government Relations Committee met with Bruce M. Fried, Health Policy Coordinator for the President-Elect Clinton Transition Team. The main topic discussed was how to increase allied health student enrollment.

FIVE YEARS AGO IN TRENDS

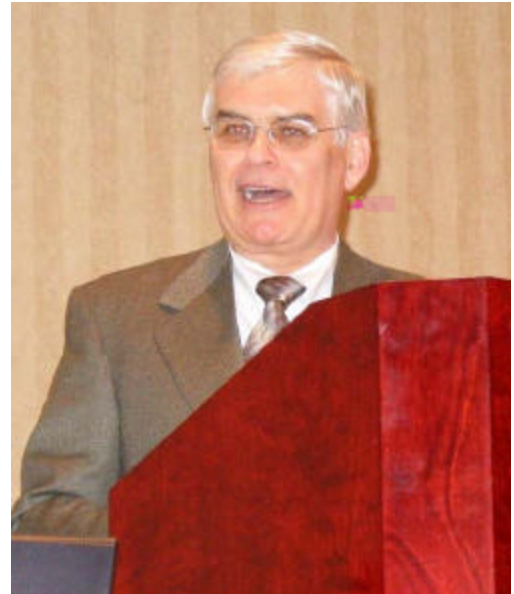
The Association's Board of Directors agreed to form a taskforce to provide advice on the creation of scholarship and research benchmarks in allied health. The Board also charged the Development Committee with the task of identifying funding sources for the newly-established *Scholarship of Excellence Fund*.

AHA'S JAMES BENTLEY DISCUSSES HEALTH WORKFORCE ISSUES

James D. Bentley, Senior Vice President for Strategic Policy Planning at the American Hospital Association, was a featured speaker at the ASAHP Winter Meeting on February 14 in Washington, DC. He highlighted the fact that his organization has formed commissions on only two occasions. The most recent of the two issued a report on the health workforce last April that was entitled, "In Our Hands."

He believes that hospitals are faced with some worrisome trends. Not only is the workforce in that sector of the economy aging, fewer potential workers are filling the vacancies that will result when the baby boomer generation retires. More generally, fewer young persons are choosing health careers.

Overall employee dissatisfaction also is high. Moreover, even if the same percentage of post-baby boomers as the boomers themselves could be recruited, the supply would not be sufficient. The problem is compounded by a 20 percent turnover rate among hospital employees. By necessity, the health workforce base needs to be broadened beyond its current profile of being mostly white and 75-85 percent female.



HOSPITAL FEDERATION VICE PRESIDENT JEFFREY COHEN EXAMINES CONGRESSIONAL HEALTH AGENDA



Jeffrey Cohen, Vice President for Legislation at the American Federation of Hospitals, was another major speaker at the Association's recent Winter Meeting. The Federation is based in Washington, DC where it represents investor-owned hospitals. Viewing the Congressional landscape, he indicated that the following realities will affect the ability to have health legislation enacted this year: a war footing, renewed budget concerns, a Republican majority in both chambers, and Senate checks and balances. In addition, he identified the following so-called wildcard factors which include: several Hill officials will run for President of the United States, a possible vacancy on the Supreme Court might occur, and a major terrorist incident could happen.

His prediction is that an outpatient drug benefit for the aged and medical liability will be health legislative priorities. A huge concern is the rapid increase in spending for health care. Expenditures reached a level of \$1.55 trillion in 2002 and they are expected to double by going as high as \$3.1 trillion by 2012. Still, there may be an opportunity to see some health legislation enacted. Republicans are eager to achieve successes on Capitol Hill in coming months. He pointed out that an Allied Health Reinvestment Act may very well fit their agenda as a means of demonstrating a concern for increasing both quality and access to health care.

BOARD ACTIONS

The ASAHP Board of Directors met on February 11-12, immediately prior to the start of the *Winter Meeting* in Washington, DC. The following motions were approved unanimously :

- A one-year trial contract with the firm of Michael Bokulich was approved to publish the *Journal of Allied Health*, beginning with the Fall 2003 issue. Assuming mutual satisfaction at the end of that period, a lengthier contractual arrangement will be developed.
- Funding was approved of a proposal by the Research Committee to conduct a Research Essentials Workshop at the Annual Conference in Toronto, Canada next October.
- Funding was approved of a proposal by the Assistant and Associate Deans to conduct a Leadership Development Workshop at the Annual Conference in Toronto, Canada next October.
- The Preliminary Budget Proposal for ASAHP in fiscal year 2004 was accepted as presented.
- A proposal to contract for the services of Capitol Associates, Inc. for a one-year period for the purpose of advancing an Allied Health Reinvestment Act was approved.
- On a yearly basis, the Board will review the number of applications for the New Investigators Award, Outstanding Researchers Award, and Outstanding Educators Award, and at their discretion, may choose either to limit the number or not name awardees at all in a particular year.
- Agreed to terminate the Financial Benchmark Project after all current financial obligations have been paid, with all such obligations encumbered by March 15, 2003.



Vice President Bill Finerfrock of Capitol Associates, Inc. (center) posed with ASAHP President David Gale (right) and ASAHP Executive Director (Thomas Elwood) shortly after the Board of Directors approved having that firm provide government relations assistance to the Association.



Unable to attend the Annual Conference last October, Linda Hatzembuehler, Dean of the College of Health Professions at Idaho State University, was presented with the President's Award at the Winter Meeting by the Association's Immediate Past-President Stephen L. Wilson.

GENOMICS CELEBRATION

As alluded to in the *President's Message* on page two of this issue of the newsletter, April will be an exciting time for the Human Genome Project. Not only will there be a declaration that the sequence of the human genome essentially is finished, the 50th anniversary of the Watson and Crick publication that appeared in *Nature* on April 2, 1953 will be celebrated. The following events are scheduled for Washington, DC:

On April 13, there will be an opening of a preview of a genomic exhibit, "Genome: The Secret of How Life Works" at the Smithsonian Institution's Arts and Industries Building.

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JOURNAL OF ALLIED HEALTH TO RECEIVE MORE GLOBAL EXPOSURE

The Association's *Journal of Allied Health* has been added to a package of publications that the World Health Organization makes available to hospitals, medical schools, and research institutions in low-income nations. Known as HINARI (Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative), it is broadly split into two "phases". In Phase One, the WHO nominated 68 countries where the annual GNP is \$1000 or less. They obtain free access to nearly 2100 key journals from 30 publishers. Phase Two is for 42 countries where the GNP is between \$1001 and \$3000. They gain access to most of the same journals for a single annual fee of \$1000. Many of the key medical and scientific general journals will remain free even in Phase Two.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Education Statistics

The National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education recently released *Projections of Education Statistics to 2012*. This publication furnishes projections for key education statistics, including enrollment and graduates in elementary and secondary schools and degree-granting institutions. The report may be accessed by clicking <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002030.pdf>.

IPEDS

The U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Peer Analysis System is a tool designed to enable a user to compare data easily from a postsecondary institution of the user's choice to a group of peer institutions, also selected by the user. The task is accomplished by generating reports using selected IPEDS variables of interest.

The system may be accessed by clicking <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/pas/>.

Health Professions Directory

The new 2003-2004 edition of the AMA's *Health Professions Career and Education Directory* currently is being typeset and soon will be made available. The updated edition includes information on 6,415 educational programs in 61 different professions.

To order a copy, call Tel: 800-621-8335 or send an e-mail message to meded@ama-assn.org to receive an automatic reply with the order form. For fastest service, be sure to specify the phrase "HPCED Order Form" in the subject line of the message.

Barriers To Distance Education

Although technology has broadened the boundaries of higher education, significant barriers to distance learning remain. A new paper, the sixth and final monograph by the American Council on Education in the ACE/EDUCAUSE series *Distributed Education: Challenges, Choices, and a New Environment*, closely examines these obstacles, including those both inside and outside the academy.

The paper may be accessed by clicking <http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/distributed-learning/distributed-learning-06.pdf>. This item and other additions to the "News Across The Professions" section of the Association's home page represent an effort to keep ASAHP members apprised of recent developments. Deans and Directors are encouraged to share this information with faculty.
