



# AASLD NEWS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF LIVER DISEASES

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### Establishment of Interest Groups for AASLD Members



Dr. Gores

The science and practice of hepatology have enjoyed rapid growth over the last decade. A hallmark of this growth has been the collaboration

of scientists and health care professionals from a range of disciplines who share common specialized interests, for example portal hypertension, viral hepatitis, and hepatocellular carcinoma, among others. AASLD has developed many vehicles to foster these collaborations, including single topic conferences, focused interest group meetings, and thematic parallel sessions at our annual meeting. To continue promoting this trend, the AASLD Governing Board is reorganizing its scientific programming for the annual fall meeting and AASLD sessions at Digestive Disease Week® along interest groups focused on specific areas within hepatology.

Currently, the AASLD Scientific Program Committee oversees all  
(See **PRESIDENT**, p. 4)

## Roadmap to the AASLD Governing Board

The eight member Nominating Committee, chaired by the Immediate Past President, consists of three members elected by the membership, two members appointed by the President, and two members appointed by the President-Elect. This committee considers all eligible candidates that have been recommended for consideration to an appointed or elected leadership position in the Association.

Nominations are welcomed and encouraged from the membership at large. To get the process started, AASLD needs only the name of the nominee, a biographical sketch, a statement on how the nominee can contribute to AASLD, a letter of recommendation, and a disclosure statement. Nominees are then contacted by AASLD for their consent to serve.

This information is then presented to the Nominating Committee, which evaluates and scores each candidate using a scale of 0 (lowest) to 5 (highest) in the following seven categories:

- Leadership Skills – communication, decision making, negotiation/collaboration
- AASLD Service and Involvement – committees, postgraduate programs, AASLD projects, and related activities
- Academic Reputation – academic position, program director, awards,

study sections, editorial boards, publications/chapters, basic research recognition and grant support, postgraduate participation, scientific honor societies

- Clinical Reputation – practicing hepatologist, teaching recognition, postgraduate participation, clinical investigator, honors, medical school appointment, hospital appointment
- National Recognition/Reputation – recognized by AASLD members/other affiliated associations/community, member or officer in national organizations, special awards/honors
- Administrative Skills – medical school or clinical background, organizational and management skills, hospital staff, laboratory supervision, clinical management, project/core grants, division head, communicative abilities

Candidates are then ranked by their average scores for further discussion by the Nominating Committee.

Per the AASLD Bylaws, the Governing Board selects the next Councilor from a slate of three candidates presented by the Nominating Committee. Every three years, the Nominating Committee also presents a slate of candidates from which the

(See **BOARD**, p. 7)

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# 2006 Education Needs Assessment Results Released

By Guadalupe Garcia-Tsao, MD, Secretary, 2004-2006

In the spring of 2006, AASLD conducted an Education Needs Assessment of its members to obtain demographic data, feedback on current programs and services, educational programs (including online education), professional and association issues, and to identify new services.

Surveys were sent to 2,728 members. 33.9%, or 909 members, completed the survey. Association Research, Inc. provided the survey instrument to members and captured the data included in this report.

The survey included 8 categories:

- Respondent Profile
- Membership
- Educational Programs
- Abstracts
- Annual Meeting
- Online Education
- Participation in AASLD Programs/Services
- Overall Evaluation

## Profile of respondents

Geographically, two-thirds (66%) of the survey participants were located in the United States, with a fairly uniform distribution across the country (25.0% Northeast; 29.5% South; 23.2% North central; 22.2% West). Of the 34% of the participants from outside the US, Japan provided the largest number of responses, followed by Canada and the United Kingdom.

In terms of age, gender, and education, six in 10 respondents were 45 or older and the average age was 48.5 years. More than seven in 10 (72.1%) respondents were male. Almost two-thirds of the respondents had an MD degree or equivalent, and 19.1% had both an MD and PhD degree. Fifty-eight respondents had an NP/PA equivalent and 32 individuals had an RN degree.

The most common primary activity was academic clinical practice (30.1%), followed closely by multiple activity (29.6%), private clinical practice (15.0%), basic science research (12.3%),

clinical research (5.6%), and administration (2.2%).

The most prevalent area of specialty was hepatology (85.3%), followed by gastroenterology (51.4%), and internal medicine (21.7%). Responses for the seven other areas (science, pediatrics, pathology, virology, surgery, clinical pharmacology, and radiology) identified were all in single digits.

## Membership

Just over half of the respondents were regular AASLD members (52.7%); international members provided a 22.6% response rate; Associate members were at 11.1%; trainee members (international and regular) provided 12.0% of the responses; and emeritus members provided 1.6% of the responses. A majority of the respondents (83.6%) had not held a leadership role in the past five years, with one in six having participated as a member on a committee or task force.

Slightly over half the respondents had been members for seven years or more,

with the average tenure at 10.6 years.

Almost seven in 10 respondents (68%) considered AASLD to be their primary membership organization. In addition to their membership in AASLD, 44.8% also belong to AGA. Just over 20% of respondents were members of ACG or EASL.

Individuals initially joined AASLD for professional advancement and educational information. While obtaining educational information is also a key reason for renewal, journals tend to replace professional advancement as a main driver of continued membership.

## Educational Programs

Seven in 10 respondents (70.1%) believe that AASLD is fulfilling its core mission "to be the leading organization for advancing the science and practice of hepatology".

Four out of 10 respondents had made changes in their practice as a result of AASLD educational programs. The

(See RESULTS, p. 4)

## Coming Soon - AMA and Gastroenterology to Conduct Physician Practice Information Survey

The American Medical Association (AMA), with the support of AASLD in collaboration with the ACG, AGA, ASGE, and more than 60 other medical specialty societies, will begin conducting a multi-specialty survey of America's physician practices beginning in April 2007. The purpose of the survey is to collect up-to-date information on physician practice characteristics in order to develop and redefine AMA and gastroenterology policy. Data related to professional practice expenses will also be collected. The AMA and participating specialty societies will survey thousands of physicians from virtually all physician specialties

throughout the year to ensure accurate and fair representation for all physicians and their patients.

During the year 2007, you may be asked to participate in this study. We encourage your participation in this survey, as the data obtained will be a critical source of information for the AMA and gastroenterology. Should you be called upon to contribute, your participation ensures that the information collected will represent your and your patients' concerns to national policymakers. Please watch for this survey in 2007 and do your part in completing it in a thorough and accurate manner.

(RESULTS, from p. 3)

highlights included: approach to hepatitis B and C management/treatment, approach to/management of patients with various other liver diseases, and transplantation issues.

Two-thirds of all respondents favored receiving CME/CE credit in face-to-face sessions as their first choice. However, 43% indicated that online education was their second method, and over a third said journal-based education.

## Abstracts

A strong majority (90.7%) were more likely to submit an abstract to the AASLD Annual Meeting than to DDW.®

## AASLD Annual Meeting

Respondents were most influenced by the strength of scientific sessions when they consider attending the AASLD Annual Meeting. Nearly 95% rated that as very important or important, a considerably higher rating than the second reason, an opportunity to present research.

Scheduling conflicts were the strongest barrier to attendance, followed by family commitments and cost to attend the meeting.

Overall, most respondents (82.4%) believed there should be no change to the format of the Annual Meeting. However, about one-third would prefer fewer concurrent sessions per day. More than 95% of respondents agreed that the AASLD Annual Meeting provides recent and complete data on new developments in liver disease. In viewing the work activity, the Annual Meeting meets the needs of clinical researchers more than clinical practitioners and basic science researchers. More than eight in 10 clinical researchers strongly agreed or agreed that the Annual Meeting meets their needs. Although rated lower by clinical practitioners and basic science researchers, at least seven out of 10 of these groups indicated their needs are met.

## Online Education

Most respondents have used the AASLD educational materials during the past year. More than half (57.6%) have used the AASLD Web site to view The

Liver Meeting® Online educational materials. The postgraduate course, State-of-the-Art lectures and plenary sessions are preferred. Only 6%, however, requested CME or CE credits for viewing the materials.

## Participation in AASLD Program/ Services

More than three-quarters of respondents participated in the AASLD Annual Meeting at least every other year, with six in 10 participating annually.

Respondents were most satisfied with

(PRESIDENT, from p. 1)

abstract submissions to our annual meeting, and is comprised of the President, President-Elect, Senior Councilor, and Secretary, along with the Chairs of the Clinical & Basic Research Committees, as well as the Surgery and Liver Transplantation, Program Evaluation, and Education Committee Chairs. With continued growth of the discipline, however, the Scientific Program Committee can no longer fully represent the breadth of expertise required to create the scientific program.

In recognition of this growth, AASLD members will be asked over time to join one or two Interest Groups, who will nominate a Chair. The interest groups will consist of both basic and clinically oriented members in order to promote translational investigation, a cornerstone of progress in biomedical research. The Chair, along with the constituency of the Interest Group, will be responsible for assembling the abstract selection committee(s) for their respective interest groups, selecting moderators for the early morning workshops, and helping to formulate the scientific sessions at our annual meeting and AASLD sessions at DDW. They will also help promote the generation of written proposals from the Interest Group for single topic conferences; these proposals will continue to be submitted to the basic and clinical research committees for prioritization and approval. Restructuring of this type has been successfully implemented by other professional societies (e.g., AGA) to accommodate the growth and differentiation of their membership. The Interest Groups will hold a business meeting at Annual Meeting.

AASLD's routine communications, followed by the professional staff and member benefits. They were somewhat less satisfied with AASLD's representation of professional interests.

By and large, this AASLD member survey, with an above average response rate (thereby legitimizing its results), demonstrates overall satisfaction with AASLD, its mission, and its current educational/research offerings. In the following years, the leadership will be particularly attentive at improving areas where deficiencies were identified. ■

To help minimize the impact and workload on the AASLD Central Office, the development of these Interest Groups (a total number of approximately 16) will be phased in over time. In 2007, the Governing Board has elected to develop the following Interest Groups:

- Cholestatic Liver Disorders, cholangiocyte pathobiology
- Portal Hypertension, clinical and experimental
- Hepatobiliary Neoplasia, liver imaging, clinical and experimental
- Pediatric Liver Disorders
- Steatosis and Steatohepatitis
- Liver Fibrosis, non-parenchymal cells

However, within the next couple of years, we anticipate establishing several additional interest groups, including acute liver failure, biliary and cholangiocyte biology, cell and molecular biology, liver transplantation and liver surgery, liver injury and regeneration, cholestatic and autoimmune liver diseases, viral hepatitis B and C, genetic liver diseases, and inflammation and immunobiology. So if your interest group is not within the first six, stay tuned, it will be established in the near future.

The solicitation for membership will occur in the second quarter of this year. Please realize that the development of other Interest Groups will be forthcoming, and only join these groups if they match your focused interest within hepatology as a discipline. The Governing Board is excited about this new initiative to help further the practice and science of liver diseases. ■

# The AASLD NP/PA Clinical Hepatology Fellowship Program: An Update

Submitted by: Colina Yim RN, MN, ACNP and Janet Durfee RN, MSN, NP

**A**s this is the first newsletter of a new year, it is a good time to review and have an update on the NP/PA Clinical Hepatology Fellowship Program, which is one of the AASLD's educational efforts targeted for the associate members. We first would like to congratulate all fellowship recipients for the past 3 years, their mentors, and their sponsoring organizations for their commitment to hepatology.

Three years ago, Dr. Teresa Wright brought forward to the Education Committee her innovative idea of a clinical fellowship for mid-level providers. Subsequently, a committee chaired by Dr. Hugo Vargas was formed specifically for the development of this program. After many months of hard work and dedication from the committee, this program received approval from the Governing Board in October 2003 and acceptance of applications started in April 2004.

This NP/PA Clinical Hepatology Fellowship Program could not have materialized without the generous support and

contribution from industry partners including Ortho Biotech, Roche, and Schering-Plough. The goal of this program is to raise the number of mid-level care providers and hence increase patient access to expert care in clinical hepatology. The program provides salary and benefit support for one year of training in the clinical care of patients with liver disease. The program applicants, however, must identify a sponsoring institution and a physician mentor.

The first fellowship program in 2004 awarded 30 applicants. In the years of 2005 and 2006, 22 and 10 fellowship awards, respectively, were granted. The selection of the candidates is a careful and detailed process that involves ranking and scoring of all candidates by the Hepatology Associates Fellowship Selection Sub-Committee. The sub-committee members also serve as peer mentors providing counselling and guidance to the trainees. The fellowship recipients of the year, along with their mentors, are recognized at the Recognition Luncheon during the AASLD Hepatology Associate Course.

Clinical experience is the core of this Program. Selected trainees will be exposed to a spectrum of liver disease. Besides daily clinical activities, trainees are also required to attend seminars, medical rounds, and conferences. The Program has an ongoing evaluation process. Both the physician mentor and the trainee are required to submit reports quarterly. Each set of reports are then reviewed by the committee for identification of issues and areas for improvement.

This NP/PA clinical hepatology training program is one of a kind in North America. It has not only fulfilled the mandate of AASLD in educating health care professionals, it has also provided an excellent opportunity for continuing professional growth and development for those with an interest in liver disease. To

date, 96% of those participating in the fellowship program have remained in a hepatology practice.

To learn more about the training program and its curriculum, please go to the AASLD Web site, click on the "Research Center" section and then "Research Awards" and find the NP/PA Clinical Fellowship Hepatology Program. The 2007 application deadline is February 15 and the recipient notification date is April 30. The fellowship period will be from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008. ■

## We're Moving!

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For more information contact us at [aasld@aasld.org](mailto:aasld@aasld.org) or go to our website at [www.aasld.org](http://www.aasld.org).

# HEPATITIS SINGLE TOPIC CONFERENCE

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
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## Interferon & Ribavirin in Hepatitis C Virus Infection: Mechanisms of Response and Non-Response

Westin Chicago River North • Chicago, Illinois  
**March 1-3, 2007**

This single topic conference will provide an overview of current understanding of interferon signaling and response pathways and their interactions with HCV infection. The mechanisms of action of interferon and ribavirin against HCV will be reviewed, and recent information on how interferon response rates are affected by clinical, viral, and host genetic host factors will be summarized. One purpose of the meeting is to stimulate translational research that applies new information on HCV-interferon interactions to develop strategies to enhance HCV response rates to interferon-based therapies.

### Goals and Objectives

- Understand the intracellular signaling pathways of type I interferon.
- Understand how hepatitis C virus interacts with the innate immune system and interferon.
- Understand the clinical and viral factors that affect response rates in hepatitis C.

*This program is supported by the AASLD/Roche Pharmaceuticals  
Hepatitis Single Topic Conference Endowment.*

For more information, go to [www.aasld.org](http://www.aasld.org) or contact AASLD  
at 703-299-9766, fax 703-299-9622, or [aasld@aasld.org](mailto:aasld@aasld.org)

# Endpoints in Clinical Trials for Hepatocellular Carcinoma Developed at AASLD Single Topic Conference

The improvement of clinical trials for hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) took center stage at the AASLD Endpoints Single Topic Conference *Endpoints in Clinical Trials for Hepatocellular Carcinoma* held December 8 and 9 in Atlanta, Georgia. The conference reviewed both the natural history of HCC and current therapies, with a goal of agreeing upon appropriate endpoints for trials in HCC.

A major concern with current HCC research methods is the lack of a uniform standard approach in clinical trials, according to course director Gregory J. Gores, MD; in the past, all researchers have used their own criteria while testing various treatment modalities and drugs. The conference allowed participants from various disciplines to reach a consensus on guidelines for HCC clinical trials, "with emphasis on how to stratify patients, determine

response, and establish appropriate control groups" as Dr. Gores points out. The audience included hepatologists, oncologists, surgeons, pharmaceutical industry, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, National Cancer Institute, and National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

Dr. Gores felt that the conference far exceeded expectations, as it was extremely informative and educational for attendees while also allowing for a standard trial design to be developed and endpoints agreed upon. In addition to Dr. Gores, Josep M. Llovet, MD and Adrian M. Di Bisceglie, MD, co-directed the course.

AASLD's next Endpoints Single Topic Conference, *Portal Hypertension and Variceal Bleeding: Unresolved Issues*, will be held June 4-6 in Atlanta, Georgia. ■

(BOARD, from p. 1)

Governing Board selects the Secretary and the Treasurer. The final slate for Governing Board positions cannot contain the names of individuals from the same institution or of individuals from the same institution as a current member of the Governing Board.

The Governing Board also approves the slate that the Nominating Committee presents for Councilor-at-Large and next year's Nominating Committee (and the Ethics Committee Chair every three years), which are then presented to the membership for a vote. Nominating Committee candidates are eligible to serve on the Nominating Committee once every five years and may be included on the slate for election by the membership only once every three years.

The position of Councilor-at-Large

brings additional balance and expertise to the Governing Board. If the Nominating Committee sees a particular area in need of representation – surgery, for example – the candidates presented to the membership for vote will all reflect this particular area.

If you haven't been an active member and would like to contribute to the organization, serving on a committee may be of interest to you. Committee appointments are made by the President-Elect with input and suggestions from the Nominating Committee, committee chairs, and members at large. The President-Elect presents his appointments to the Governing Board for final approval in August. Be sure to reach out to AASLD's incoming leaders and let your interest be known. Nominations for committee service are currently being accepted at [www.aasld.org](http://www.aasld.org). ■

## Future Meetings of Related Societies

The International Pediatric Transplant Association 4th Congress on Pediatric Transplant Medicine

will take place in Cancun, Mexico, March 17-21, 2007.

**Further information:**  
[www.IPTAonline.org](http://www.IPTAonline.org)

*Initiating a European Platform Organ Transplantation: Ethical, Legal and Psychological Aspects Towards a Common European Policy* will be held at the World Trade Center Rotterdam, The Netherlands, April 1-4, 2007.

**Further information:**  
[www.elpat.eu](http://www.elpat.eu) or  
[www.hetcongresbureau.nl](http://www.hetcongresbureau.nl)

The 42nd Annual Meeting of EASL will be held April 11-15, 2007, in Barcelona, Spain.

**Further information:** [www.easl.ch](http://www.easl.ch)

The 31st King's Liver Course *Chronic Liver Disease: Best Practice* will be held at the Strand Campus of King's College London, April 19-20, 2007, in London, England.

**Further information:**  
[www.kingslivercourse.org](http://www.kingslivercourse.org)

The 17th Annual Irwin M. Arias, MD, Symposium *Bridging Basic Science and Liver Disease* will be held November 2, 2007, in Boston, Massachusetts.

**Further information:**  
[www.liverfoundation-ne.org](http://www.liverfoundation-ne.org)

To add your meeting to this list in an upcoming issue of *NEWS*, please email your information to [atracy@aaasld.org](mailto:atracy@aaasld.org). ■

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AASLD News is published six times a year and is an exclusive benefit of membership. The material published in each issue is provided to inform readers about the Association's activities. Please send comments to [aasld@aasld.org](mailto:aasld@aasld.org).

### AASLD'S MISSION

**AASLD IS A LEADING ORGANIZATION  
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OF HEPATOLOGY**

## MARK THE DATES

For Annual Meeting information, please contact:

**Pam Ballinger**  
C/O Association  
Headquarters  
856-439-0500

For all other meetings, please contact the **AASLD central office: 703-299-9766.**



Hepatitis STC  
March 1-3, 2007  
Chicago, IL

Training Directors' Workshop  
March 2-4, 2007  
San Antonio, TX

The Henry M. and Lillian  
Stratton Basic Research STC  
June 2-4, 2007  
Atlanta, GA

Endpoints STC  
June 4-6, 2007  
Atlanta, GA

Clinical Research STC  
September 7-9, 2007  
Atlanta, GA

2007 Postgraduate Course  
November 2-3, 2007  
Boston, MA

58th AASLD Annual Meeting  
November 2-6, 2007  
Boston, MA



## THANK YOU

**A**ASLD sincerely thanks the following entities for their generous support of the Association and its activities:

- Alpha-1 Foundation
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