

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2001

The 2001 Annual meeting of the AVAA was held on the 15th of October in New Orleans at Brennan's Restaurant. The staff at Brennan's went all out, providing us a remarkable selection of French Creole dishes along with an atmosphere and hospitality that defines the best of New Orleans. It was particularly gratifying to meet so many new members at this year's meeting. Clearly the AVAA is growing and reaching out to a far broader spectrum of VA anesthesiologists.

In addition to welcoming the many new AVAA members, this year's meeting was the first to have ASA leadership in attendance. ASA secretary Thomas Cromwell, MD and Assistant Secretary Peter Hendricks, MD expanded on the ASA's deliberations towards establishing a governmental component society within ASA. The ASA, recognizing that many federally employed anesthesiologists are not being well served by their respective state component societies, is considering creating a component society for DOD and VA practitioners. Many intricacies of this process, particularly whether VA anesthesiologists would be permitted to join both their state society and the government component society was discussed. The ASA, in conjunction with AVAA and C.O. Anesthesiology Service, has agreed to conduct a nationwide survey of federal anesthesiologists to better gauge the impact and needs of the new component society. At the heart of this issue is ensuring that federal anesthesiologists gain adequate representation in ASA. As many examples at federal facilities attest, without us the ASA risks falling short of its goal to raise the standards of the medical practice of anesthesiology and improve the care of the patient.

Jane Tollett, RN, Ph.D., Director of the VA National Pain Initiative, joined us at Brennan's and presented the major programs coming through C.O. to advance pain medicine. The need of more active engagement of anesthesiologists in the pain initiatives was stressed. She announced March 2-6, 2003 as the tentative dates for the next VA Pain Initiative Conference. She can be reached at [jane.tollett@hq.med.va.gov](mailto:jane.tollett@hq.med.va.gov). Dave Clark, MD, Ph.D. (Palo Alto) emphasized the role of the VA anesthesiologist in pain management. He noted that the scope of pain management goes far beyond end of life care and that specialists in pain medicine are essential to the care of patients with chronic pain.

Mike Bishop, MD, (Seattle) Director, Central Office Anesthesia Service, provided a snapshot of the many resources available through C.O. Anesthesia Service. The Central Office Anesthesia web site provides a variety of helpful and time saving material. It can be reached at [anesthesia.med.va.gov](http://anesthesia.med.va.gov)

Martin London, MD (San Francisco), provided an update on the web resources now available through AVAA and encourages interested members to contact him with suggestions on how to enhance the AVAA web site as a valuable asset to VA anesthesiologists.

To reiterate my comments at the meeting, AVAA continues to actively confront policies and inadequacies that detract from the quality of anesthetic care with VHA. Addressing issues of competitive pay scales and reestablishing vibrant academic programs remain top priorities towards improving the practice of VA anesthesiology.

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**Previous AVAA News:**

1. **Michael J Bishop, MD (Seattle) named Headquarters Anesthesia Director.** The AVAA has actively pursued CO to recruit for this post and we are very pleased to have Dr. Bishop, a faculty member of the University of Washington and Chief, Anesthesiology at the Seattle VA, fill the 2 year vacant position. Dr. Bishop addressed the AVAA at our annual meeting in October and minutes from this meeting are featured [here](#). Dr. William Schmeling (Milwaukee) has accepted the position of Chairman, HAS Field Advisory Committee. Dr Schmeling moderates the [Field Advisory Committee](#) forum.

2. **ASA considers establishment of Component Society for Government Anesthesiologists.** Proponents feel that component society status would give a greater voice and greater participation in the ASA by military and VA anesthesiologists, many of whom are not active in their state societies. Also, it was noted that the component society would offer a better means for the ASA to support anesthesiologists as they face staffing and medical practice supervision issues in government facilities. Members are encouraged to discuss their opinions on this development with any of the committee members.

3. **Gerald MacDonald, MD the Acting Director, Headquarters Surgery service addresses AVAA.** Dr. MacDonald emphasized the importance of the AVAA as a representative of Anesthesiologists and as a proponent for anesthesia practice within the VA. He also shared with us his thoughts on enhancing the recruitment and retention of medical specialists with VAMC.

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