

Guest Editorial

Thyroid Clinicians, Scientists, and Patients to Meet in Los Angeles, California

THE 74th ANNUAL MEETING of the American Thyroid Association (ATA) will be held in Los Angeles, California from October 9–13, 2002. As the scientific program co-chairs, we are delighted to have this opportunity to outline what is certain to be a truly outstanding and memorable meeting. The Program Committee has designed a program to provide “something for everyone,” with equal emphasis on clinical and basic science innovations, all complemented by a refreshing social program. It was only a few years ago that the ATA relaxed its longstanding policy that prohibited simultaneous sessions. While there are now a number of such sessions, they are designed to be noncompeting by having clinical topics paired with basic science, and this approach is repeated in our scheduling of the Meet-the-Professor presentations and various symposia. Selected symposia, lectures, oral abstract sessions, and the prize lectures, however, still allow us all to come together for common sessions on each day. New approaches to diagnosis and treatment of common thyroid disorders will be presented during the Grand Rounds case presentations and the industry-sponsored CMES (Continuing Medical Education Symposia) Early Riser Sessions, the content of which has been coordinated to complement the overall program. We believe that the presentations dealing with new directions and approaches to the treatment of thyroid malignancy from both the basic science and clinical perspectives will be particularly exciting. Another feature of the program is the inclusion of topics on uncommon but perplexing problems associated with thyroid disease related to the specialties of dermatology, nuclear medicine, surgery, psychiatry, and obstetrics-gynecology. A symposium on the use of potassium iodide for thyroid protection in the event of a nuclear incident is likely to attract both scientific and media attention.

We revised the abstract categories this year in hopes of better reflecting the active areas of thyroid-related investigation. For the first time, we also asked authors submitting their abstracts to designate a clinical or basic theme for their

work. The final tally of abstract categories clearly reflects the strength of our society and annual meeting. There was an almost even split between clinical and basic abstracts. Our annual meeting continues to be a forum where those interested in basic and clinical investigation related to thyroid diseases can gather to mutually benefit from the perspective that each provides.

There is a long history of scientific advances in thyroid research being applied to other areas of investigation, for example, insights from thyroid autoimmunity, thyroid hormone and thyrotropin (TSH) immunoassays, thyroid hormone action, and the genetics of thyroid cancer. This year's meeting includes examples of continued advances in thyroid investigation now being applied to the latest approaches to gene therapy, novel treatments for cancer, metabolic regulation, and informed drug design. The thyroid hormone nuclear receptor is now a target for therapy of “nonthyroid” disorders, including hypercholesterolemia, obesity, and heart and psychiatric diseases.

The emphasis on themed symposia will continue, although there will still be a number of opportunities to learn the latest in thyroid-related research in the form of abstracts and posters. Many of the abstracts represent an overlap of traditional thyroid subdisciplines, so oral abstract sessions will be grouped by themes. The “short call” abstracts will allow the latest thyroid research to be presented, with a deadline for submission just a month before the meeting. Poster sessions are planned with space and time to allow for the important exchange that can take place with the presenters.

We are pleased that ThyCa: Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association and the National Graves' Disease Foundation have planned their annual conferences for patients and families to be held concurrently with our meeting in Los Angeles. This will allow a number of those attending the ATA meeting to serve as discussants and session leaders for the patient conferences. As many as 500 patients and their families are expected to attend these two meetings.

The Patient Forum, organized by the Thyroid Foundation of America and the ATA with the support of the other patient societies and held during our meeting, is likely to continue as an important public service.

There will be a strong international flavor to the meeting, starting with the opening keynote address. Indeed, the meeting will represent an elite gathering of the best investigative and clinical minds in thyroidology in the world. Scattered throughout the meeting are breaks and social events to foster the camaraderie and enjoyment in learning typical of ATA meetings. Apart from the science of the meeting, these moments can often be important in allowing us to renew acquaintances with friends from all over the world, perhaps find

positions for our younger scientists, and provide networking for both research and clinical interests. Great science, valued colleagues, an inspiring venue, wonderful climate, the glamour of Hollywood, and a taste of California wine. We look forward to seeing you there!

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