



ATA SIGNAL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN THYROID ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 4 NO. 1 APRIL 2001

ATA Public Affairs Initiative

For the ATA to fulfill its mission, the Association must communicate effectively with patients, the media, the scientific and medical communities, and public and private policymakers, as well as with our own membership. According to Secretary Paul Ladenson, "Put simply, ATA must be the most authoritative, up-to-date, and responsive source of information about all 'matters thyroidal.'" In March 2001, the ATA took a big step toward making its voice more prominent by hiring a Director of Public Affairs. The director will take responsibility for many forms of communication and education with both lay and professional audiences (see page 2).

The Director of Public Affairs will be of particular help to ATA committees. Standards of Care Committee Chair Susan Mandel explains that until now, the Administrator or Secretary has contacted her about press, organizational, and patient issues. It has then taken her considerable time to disseminate the information to her committee, consider their input, and draft a response. She hopes now to be able to share the burden of handling these issues. Public Health Committee Chair Arthur Schneider seeks help in determining which inquiries require an immediate response and in responding to the appropriate audience. He says, "The Committee considers this a key element in making the



*Edie Stern
Director of Public Affairs*

ATA a more relevant and, thereby, a more visible organization."

Edie Stern, a medical writer in Baltimore, will direct the new Public Affairs Office. Edie comes to the ATA after 25 years at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, where she was managing editor for the textbook *The Principles and Practice of Medicine* (23rd edition), *Issues in Low Vision Rehabilitation*, and audiovisual continuing education series for physicians. For the last five years, Edie coordinated the public affairs program of the Lions Vision Research and Rehabilitation Center at the Wilmer Eye Institute. She co-created the Hopkins course "Scientific Writing for the Novice and the Nervous," and teaches about the writing and design of patient education materials and teaching slides. Edie is a Fellow of the American Medical Writers Association and

a recipient of its President's Award. Her background also includes stints as a VISTA Volunteer, social work assistant, ballet company manager, and musician.

Edie's commitment to education, patient care, and research into thyroid disease goes beyond the purely professional. She is one of four children, all with successfully managed thyroid disease. Edie brings to the ATA a zeal to help the many patients with undiagnosed thyroid disorders get effective diagnosis and treatment. She says, "This is an extraordinary opportunity to work with the leaders in thyroidology to make a difference in countless people's lives."

The Public Affairs Office has been funded through an unrestricted educational grant from Abbott Laboratories.

One of the Office's early projects will be to create a database of ATA members who are willing to make themselves available for comment or consultation on specific issues. Members are encouraged to complete and return the survey in this issue of the SIGNAL, soliciting their professional interests, public affairs expertise and experience, and suggestions for enhancing the ATA's public voice. If you have ideas or late-breaking news of your own, or if you want to offer your help now, please contact Edie Stern at <estern@thyroid.org>.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



We are fortunate to live in amazing scientific and technological times. The Human Genome Project

has just completed its mission, with a promise for great future advances in medicine. The question I ask is whether we in the thyroid field will be a part of this revolution. Ironically, these are difficult times for thyroid research, even though thyroid disorders affect many people and largely are not yet "cured." One of the most important things that we can do as an organization is to raise the

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President's Message

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consciousness of all to the importance of continuing to learn more about thyroid disorders. Hence, we must inform and educate. We must urge public support of our efforts. Will we remain an "old boys/girls" club and a "mom-and-pop" operation, allowing market forces to doom us to extinction, or will we look at the future squarely and advocate action?

The ongoing strategic planning process gives us a chance to look at our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and to provide a map for possible future actions. The strategic plan has been revised and a draft has been sent to you for your comments and suggestions. To deal more productively with issues of common concern, including public education, awareness, and advocacy, the plan asks for more interactions with our members, sister societies, and the public in the spirit of outreach. You will read in this issue about our new Public Affairs Office. We are also redesigning the web site for more user-friendly access for the public, members, and the media; and continuing improvements in our

Administrative Office. While some might argue for other approaches, there should be little question about the need to act...and to act now. I ask that you enter this discussion after studying the draft, and I urge your support.

The Program Committee, chaired by Wolf Dillmann and Mike Kaplan, has prepared an outstanding program for our meeting in September in Washington, DC. The program will feature the latest advances and highlight the most recent controversies in the clinical and scientific aspects of thyroid disorders. Of note, this year's agenda will have a robust program for our thyroid clinicians, integrated with the overall meeting and extending over its duration. I hope that you make plans to attend and to participate.

Have a great spring and summer. I look forward to seeing you in Washington, DC in September.



WILLIAM CHIN, M.D.

Major Responsibilities of the ATA Director of Public Affairs
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- Improve communication with ATA members through the web site, e-mail, SIGNAL newsletter, and other written communications
- Create a databank of members' expertise and public affairs interests
- Anticipate, monitor, and respond to thyroid-related news, scientific developments, and policies affecting thyroid public health, research, and clinical practice
- Keep members informed about these issues
- Make the ATA's positions known to the media and policymakers through press releases, policy statements, interviews, presentations, press conferences, and campaigns
- Serve as *the* thyroid information resource for the media and for other organizations
- Increase media coverage of articles published in THYROID and CLINICAL THYROIDOLOGY, as well as coverage of findings presented at the ATA Annual Meeting and other conferences
- Increase public awareness of thyroid disease and its management by preparing patient education materials, generating and placing news stories, maintaining an up-to-date ATA web site, and leading a yearly national thyroid awareness campaign
- Maintain contact and cooperation with other professional societies, patient education and support groups, government agencies, health systems, and industry

UPCOMING SOCIETY MEETINGS
Endocrine Society 83rd Annual Meeting

June 20-23, 2001 Denver, CO
 Denver Convention Center
 phone: 301 941-0200
 fax: 301 941-0259
 online: www.endo-society.org

Prevention of Thyroid Disease

August 23-24, 2001 Aalborg, Denmark
 phone: ++ 45 99321736
 fax: ++ 45 98120253
 e-mail: Thyroid-Prevention@aas.nja.dk

Hypothyroidism: Clinical and Basic Aspects

Course for young investigators from ETA members' laboratories
 August 24-25, 2001 Warsaw, Poland
 e-mail: paul.banga@kcl.ac.uk
 e-mail: laszlo.hegedus@ouh.fyns-amt.dk
 e-mail: Anette.grueters@charite.de

2nd Meeting of the European Thyroid Cancer Research Network

August 25, 2001 Warsaw, Poland
 phone: ++39 050 544723
 fax: ++39 050 578772
 e-mail: relisei@endoc.med.unipi.it

27th Annual Meeting of the European Thyroid Association

August 25-29, 2001 Warsaw, Poland
 contact: Professor Janusz Nauman
 fax: +48 22 659 75 62
 e-mail: janu@amwaw.edu.pl
 online: www.amwaw.edu.pl/eta

Iodine Prophylaxis: Its Benefits and Possible Side Effects

International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders
 August 29-30, 2001 Krakow, Poland
 phone and fax: ++48 12 4214054
 online: www.endo.cm-uj.krakow.pl

Innovative Approaches to the Treatment of Graves' Orbitopathy

September 8-9, 2001 New York, NY
 Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons
 contact: Center for Continuing Education
 phone: 212 305-3334
 fax: 212 781-6047
 e-mail: cme@columbia.edu
 online: <http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/cme>

ATA 73rd Annual Meeting

September 12-16, 2001 Washington, DC
 Omni Shoreham Hotel
 Meeting registration packet mailed by June 1, 2001
 Abstract deadline May 9, 2001
 Short call abstract deadline August 8, 2001
 fax: 845 623-3736
 e-mail: admin@thyroid.org
 online: www.thyroid.org

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SECRETARY'S REPORT



The ATA leads in thyroidology by promoting excellence and innovation in clinical care, research, education, and public advocacy.

To achieve our mission, the ATA must have the most authoritative, up-to-date, clear, and responsive voice in matters of thyroid biology and disease. Every day in the Nanuet office, it is obvious that people expect this of us. By telephone, e-mail, fax, and snail mail, patients, clinicians, investigators, reporters, and policymakers contact us expecting answers about the thyroid and its implications for human health. While our staff, officers, and committees—especially the Public Health and Standards of Care Committees—struggle to respond, we are often “a day late and a dollar short.”

Nature abhors a vacuum, and so do the public and press when they want answers. When we fail to provide them promptly, others fill the information gap. Some of these sources are trustworthy, often relying on ATA members to speak on their behalf. But other public voices are unreliable and self-serving. The Internet has accentuated this problem, offering a powerful outlet to anyone with a web site and an ax to grind.

The ATA simply has to do a better job in public affairs. We must offer more professional staffing and better-defined procedures so our volunteer members can disseminate their knowledge and wisdom about the thyroid, its diseases, and their prevention and cure. Of course, this support will not be free, but we have potential partners with resources in industry and in our sister societies representing professional colleagues and patients.

This issue of the SIGNAL describes the role of the new ATA Director of Public Affairs. This initiative is funded for two years by an unrestricted educational grant from Abbott Laboratories. The Director will give a tremendous boost to several of the ATA's recently articulated strategic commitments: patient and policy leadership, clinical excellence and relevance, and expansion of collaborations with sister societies and others to advance the aims of thyroidology.

With best regards,

PAUL LADENSON, M.D.

T3 Toxicity Alert

In March, three Atlanta area women were hospitalized with thyrotoxic crises after taking T3 capsules compounded at a local pharmacy. Two of the patients were delirious and required ventilatory support for more than a week. All three women were being treated for “Wilson's syndrome.” Many more patients in metro Atlanta and eastern Alabama—some with no evidence of underlying thyroid disease—have been prescribed compounded T3, and some have been found to have thyrotoxic serum T3 levels. The Georgia Drugs and Narcotics Agency is investigating.

It is apparent that other physicians around the country are prescribing T3 for inappropriate indications, and sometimes in dangerously high doses. As shown by the Atlanta experience, compounding errors by pharmacists can make this a life-threatening problem.

ATA has determined that there is no current scientific basis for “Wilson's syndrome,” and urges physicians and patients to read its policy statement in the web site (www.thyroid.org/anonc/wilson.htm).

Introducing Our Two New Council Members

*Gregory A. Brent, M.D. and Jeffrey Garber, M.D.
Appointed to four-year terms*

Gregory Brent and Jeffrey Garber were recently appointed to serve four-year terms on the ATA Executive Council; both Greg and Jeff have long been active in ATA activities.

Medicine and Physiology at UCLA, and as Assistant Chief of Endocrinology at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center.

Greg is married to Dina, a pediatrician whom he met when



Shown with Bill Chin are Greg Brent (l) and Jeffrey Garber (r)

Gregory Brent joined the ATA in 1988, and has served on the Education, Program, and Membership Committees. He chaired the Membership Committee from 1997 to 1999, and during his tenure, ATA membership increased considerably. He also served as Associate Editor of THYROID from 1997 to 1999. By lobbying the virtues of Los Angeles to the ATA leadership, Greg secured that fair city as the venue for the ATA's Annual Meeting in 2002. Because of his efforts, Greg chairs the Local Organizing Committee, which serves to increase his workload considerably.

In 1996, the ATA honored Greg with the Van Meter Award.

Greg is a native Los Angeleno, and is a graduate of both USC's undergraduate and medical schools. He did his medical residency at the Wadsworth VA Medical Center in Los Angeles, and moved on to his fellowship in Boston under the tutelage of Reed Larsen. He then returned to Los Angeles, where he now serves as Associate Professor of

both were 18-year-old undergrads at USC. They have five children, ages 6 to 17, none of whom have yet expressed an interest in endocrinology.

Greg wishes to remind our readers that his first abstract submission for the 1984 ATA Annual Meeting was rejected, although the research was published the following year in the *Annals of Internal Medicine!* Was our abstract review process tougher then?

Jeffrey Garber has been a member of the ATA since 1992, and has served on the Finance & Audit and By-Laws Committees, and served as chair of the latter committee.

Jeff attended college at Cornell, and attended medical school at SUNY. He then spent four years at the Los Angeles County/University of Southern California Medical Center as intern, medical resident, and chief resident; next was an endocrinology fellowship at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston.

Jeff is currently Chief of

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BULLETIN BOARD

New time for ATA
Committee Meetings

Wednesday,
September 12, 2001
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Omni Shoreham Hotel
Washington DC

ATA SIGNAL



THE AMERICAN
THYROID
ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Two New Council Members

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Endocrinology at the Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, an independent multi-specialty, nonprofit Harvard-affiliated group practice with about 250,000 patients. Jeff's professional interests include endocrine fellowship clinical training, and disease management programs.

Jeff brings a unique perspective to the ATA Council, since he serves on the Board of Directors of AACE. He says that he would like to see the ATA and AACE increase collab-

oration.

Jeff is married to Sheri Lyman, who has a residential real estate company in Brookline, Massachusetts. Jeff and Sheri have two sons, 21-year-old Ben, who is a junior at the University of Chicago, and 18-year-old Solly, a freshman at Cornell. Sounds like pretty hefty over-

*Welcome to both of the ATA's
new Council members.*

Upcoming Society Meetings

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Thyroid and Graves Ophthalmopathy Symposium

September 21-22, 2001 Graz, Austria

contact: S. Ramschak-Schwarzer

phone: +43 316 3852383

fax: +43 316 3853428

e-mail: sigrid.ramschak-schwarzer@klinikum-graz.at

ThyCa 2001: 4th Annual Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Conference

ThyCa: Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association, Inc.

September 21-23, 2001 Chevy Chase, MD

National 4-H Conference Center

phone: 877 588-7904

phone in Washington, DC: 301 260-0975

fax: 503 905-9725

e-mail: conference@thyca.org

online: www.thyca.org

2nd International Huaxia Congress of Endocrinology

December 14-17, 2001 Hong Kong SAR, China

Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre

contact: Ms Victoria Cheng

phone: 852 2369 9052-4

fax: 852 2723 9044

e-mail: pc@pctourshk.com

on-line: endocrine-hk.org/huaxia2001

International Symposium & Workshop: Thyroid Cancer Three

October 2-5, 2002 Linz, Austria

fax: +011 437-3276-777318

e-mail: werner.langsteger@bhs.at

ATA 74th Annual Meeting

October 9-13, 2002 Los Angeles, CA

Regal Biltmore Hotel

fax: 845 623-3736

e-mail: admin@thyroid.org

online: www.thyroid.org

ATA Council Highlights
Baltimore, Maryland
February 10-11, 2001

- President Bill Chin presented to Council the revised ATA Strategic Plan. After refinement by input from members, Council will do a final review and comment, and then will implement the Plan.
- To strengthen the ATA's authoritative voice in thyroid matters, Council approved Secretary Paul Ladenson's proposal to enhance the Association's public affairs capabilities. This initiative, starting with the hiring of a part-time scientific writer to create a Public Affairs Office, will help ATA communicate with the public, press, scientists, and members about ATA activities, positions, and responses to scientific advances, other news, and policies relevant to thyroidology.
- Treasurer David Cooper reported on ATA's financial status, which remains sound despite the lack of income from an Annual Meeting in 2000. Noting that ATA meeting registration fees have been substantially lower than comparable societies, David and Finance and Audit Committee Chair Steve Spaulding recommended that these be increased to ensure a reasonable margin in anticipation of the next international meeting year in 2005. David and Steve also reported that ATA's endowment portfolio had weathered the worst stock market environment in 25 years with no net loss.
- Dr. Robert Utiger, recently appointed Editor-in-Chief of CLINICAL THYROIDOLOGY, described his plans for the new ATA publication, which will remain a compendium of reviews and commentary on recent original articles in thyroidology.
- Education Committee Chair Jim Hennessey presented a plan to invite AACE to cooperate with ATA in a new Thyroid Workshop format to be offered at the annual meetings of family physicians and obstetrician-gynecologists.
- Campaign for Thyroid Discovery Chair Pepper Davis reported that donations and commitments now approach one-half of the \$3 million campaign target. He outlined plans for the next phase of the fundraising effort, which will include encouraging broad participation by the membership and solicitation of foundations and firms, with the support of six regional committees.



SIGNAL Readers' Survey



The ATA SIGNAL has had a newer look since December 1999. After nearly two years of efforts to be more “newsy” and topical, we want to know if you think we’re on the right track. Please fill out the survey below and return it to Edie Stern, 2710 N. Howard St., Baltimore, MD 21218, or e-mail your comments to Peter Singer (psinger@hsc.usc.edu) or Edie Stern (estern@thyroid.org). Thank you!

Do you read the SIGNAL consistently? occasionally? infrequently?

If you don't read it consistently, what might make you more likely to want to read it? _____

Which articles interest you most? front page President's Report Secretary's Report announcements
 Council highlights other features _____

Are the pictures clear enough? yes no Would you like more fewer pictures? Pictures of what? _____

Is the SIGNAL published too often? not often enough? just about right?

Do you like the layout of the SIGNAL? yes no What would you like done differently? _____

What other types of articles would you like to see included? _____

Would you like to write articles for the SIGNAL? If yes, print your name: _____

More comments:



ATA Public Affairs Survey



Name: _____ Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

I would like the public affairs initiative to include/I think ATA should increase its visibility by:

Please mark all that apply. If you wish, rank your interests by number.

Topics on which I would like to be consulted:

- clinical care for hyperthyroidism hypothyroidism Graves' disease thyroid hormone treatment
 thyroid cancer thyroid disease in the elderly postpartum thyroiditis childhood head and neck irradiation
 others: _____
- research into thyroid molecular biology cell biology anatomy physiology genetics diagnosis
 treatments outcomes prevention epidemiology radioactivity-related risks to the thyroid
 other public health issues: _____
- others: _____

I would like to take part in the public affairs initiative by:

- responding to or advising on inquiries from patients professionals government media
 helping keep the Director of Public Affairs apprised of developments in my special interests
 serving as an ATA spokesperson by phone by e-mail at professional meetings at press conferences
 on radio on TV in video programs
 serving as a guest speaker
 representing the ATA on matters of public policy
 translating and summarizing technical information for lay audiences
 helping or advising on preparation of the yearly national thyroid awareness campaign
 advising on preparation of patient information materials professional ATA publications
 helping with intra-ATA communication through the SIGNAL web site e-mail
 others: _____

- I'm willing to be contacted on short notice at night and on weekends

My public affairs experience and skills include:

Please keep me informed about the following issues:

Other suggestions: