

## The President's Page

The 1996 annual meeting is history and was a major success. We owe thanks to many people, especially Vicki Baker, Program Chair, Margaret McLaughlin, Assistant Program Chair, and Craig Winkel, Local Arrangements Coordinator. Council met in conjunction with the meeting. This month's letter presents several updates discussed at Council. Jim Rose also presents a report on the Government Affairs Committee's progress.

There was a good deal of discussion about presentations at the annual meeting. Everyone agreed that the primary function of presentations at the meeting is the sharing of information. Nonetheless, concerns were raised about prior presentation at other meetings and previous publication. Since its inception, the purpose of the SGI Annual Meeting has been to serve as a forum to present new work. Despite our commitment to maximizing information exchange, this puts certain responsibilities upon the individual. Information presented should not have been presented at another national meeting or regional meeting where publications of proceedings are published nationally. The work should obviously not have been published. The best way to guarantee no prior publication before the presentation is to delay submission of the manuscript until after submission of the abstract. Even with this caution, especially with electronic publishing, publication may occur before the meeting. If this happens, decision for presentation at the meeting would be on a case by case basis.

I also wanted to remind you of the abstract selection process. This reminder is stimulated by the fortunate (unfortunate) fact that two of the five plenary presentations came from the Magee Womens Research Institute, the home of the then President-Elect and Assistant Program Director. We are quite proud of (embarrassed by) this accomplishment. The abstract selection, as many of you know, is done anonymously by reviewers around the country. This year, there were actually two anonymous levels of review. After initial review by four different reviewers, the top 175 abstracts were rejudged by a second group of senior investigators. Their charge was to select abstracts most appropriate for the plenary session. After this process, we were thrilled (dismayed) that two abstracts selected for plenary presentation were from MWRI. We had three choices. One was to forbid the presentations by the selected investigators. This seemed a little unfair. It wasn't the investigators fault that we were goofy enough to coordinate the meeting. Second, we could have resigned, which also did not seem appropriate nor timely. Finally, we could explain, as clearly as possible, that there was no collusion. Thus, this time, I hope (dread) a similar problem (success) occurs next year.

Anne Wentz's initiative of formulating a research ethics policy for the SGI is currently in progress. Bob Cefalo headed this ad hoc committee and presented his preliminary recom-

mendations. The statement is now in revision. The general principles guiding this policy statement are that it is quite appropriate that the SGI expect its membership to maintain high ethical standards in their research endeavors. Failure to maintain such standards would be grounds for dismissal. It was not felt that the organization would be well served by attempting to police this, but rather would refer these investigations and judgments to the investigator's institution. The action of the SGI would be determined by these decisions.

The issue raised in my prior communication, involvement of the SGI in government affairs, was the main topic of discussion at my meeting with the past presidents. I am convinced there was a time when such a concept would not have been favored. However, the idea met with universal enthusiasm at this meeting. Of the several excellent suggestions offered, one was especially pertinent. It was recommended that the SGI "define itself." Our strength and influence originates not from numbers, but from the quality and accomplishments of the membership. Unfortunately, we currently have no accurate information relating to this. Mark Phillipe is preparing a questionnaire that will be circulated with the mailing later this year. This will enable us (if you respond) to quantify the potential influence of our membership.

Finally, the noncontroversial question of the month. It has been suggested that the name of our organization does not reflect our mission to the public. Should the name of the SGI be changed? Any suggestions?

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### GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

At the recent meeting of the council of the SGI, the Government Affairs Committee received its charge. This charge has as its focus convincing you, the membership of the SGI, to become more proactive in communicating to Congress the importance of supporting biomedical research in this country. If research on human development and women's health issues is to thrive in the future, we must be willing to repeatedly educate our representatives in Congress about the vital nature of support for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Thus, in the coming months, you will be hearing from this committee as we try to implement strategies to make it easier for you to keep your legislators in Congress informed of the importance of supporting funding for the NIH. Remember, they do need to hear from us on a regular basis.

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