

Report to the Membership...

As 40 Year Career Winds Down, AAMI Leader Reflects on Successes, Challenges

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As I write this—my final report to the membership—I think back to when AAMI began. After a somewhat rocky start in 1967, AAMI had become a “real” organization by the time I interviewed with Dwight Harken for the executive director position in 1969. Harken, an AAMI founder and legendary heart surgeon, used his powers of persuasion to talk me into accepting the job.



How far this organization has come in 40 years! Today, AAMI is a thriving organization representing more than 6,000 members. Through the efforts of the Board and staff, AAMI has become a leader in medical device standards development, educational programs, medical technology management forums, education, and recognition programs.

This final report gives me one last opportunity to highlight AAMI's accomplishments and plans for the future. Given the current economic climate, 2009 will be a challenging year for all associations. But as I depart, AAMI is in the capable hands of a strong board, staff, and new president and well-positioned to help its members face what lies ahead.

A Growing and Diverse Membership

AAMI's membership reached a record high in 2008. Of note, the number of hospitals and other organizations that have joined AAMI as institutional members over the last six years has nearly doubled—growing at a faster pace than any other category of membership. In 2008, more students than ever before joined AAMI, and more than 100 individuals have joined through our New Professional Membership category, created to introduce professionals to AAMI who have been in the field for five years or less.

In 2008, AAMI also succeeded in forming new partnerships in the membership arena. The U.S. Department

of Veterans Affairs (VA) signed up 150 of its healthcare facilities as institutional members of AAMI. In addition to giving VA employees an opportunity to benefit from AAMI's services, the program also opened doors to all AAMI members by providing increased networking opportunities with VA personnel through AAMI publications, educational events, online forums, and other networking functions.

While the economic recession could prove challenging, we anticipate growth in all categories of membership this year. AAMI will also evaluate opportunities to increase the number of non-U.S. members through online membership benefits and collaborative arrangements with relevant organizations in other nations. AAMI will continue to explore a new form of “collaborative membership” by which AAMI and other societies, as appropriate, would offer discounted dues on a reciprocal basis.

While membership growth is important, the satisfaction and retention of current AAMI members is as critical to maintaining a diverse membership. As such, the AAMI leadership has embarked on several major projects to increase the value of AAMI membership by offering new products and services as well as more networking opportunities.

2008 Issues and Accomplishments

2008 marked continued growth and notable successes in all AAMI programs, from standards and education to publications and other services. The medical device standards program, the need for which drove AAMI's founding more than 40 years ago, is still a centerpiece of AAMI activities. A major focus of the program today is to work toward developing a single, internationally accepted standard for each medical device or industrial process. The association's extensive work—and success—in the international arena is driven by this desire.

Over the past year, AAMI completed 45 new or revised standards, including 15 AAMI documents, 22 inter-

national standards that were also adopted by AAMI, and eight other international standards.

The first set of amendments for AAMI's most popular document, ANSI/AAMI ST79, *Comprehensive guide to steam sterilization and sterility assurance in health care facilities*, were issued in 2008. The document is maintained under continuous maintenance procedures and another set of amendments will be finalized this year.

In the education arena, AAMI's programs bring the association into contact with more than 9,000 people each year. Webinars have become a popular educational outlet, greatly increasing access to AAMI's educational programs. More than two dozen educational programs are offered this year based on U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and standards-related issues, including a new comprehensive course on human factors and one on documents and records management.

The needs of the technology management community continue to be the focus of AAMI's Annual Conference & Expo. The Expo continues to experience growth and has seen a retention rate of more than 80% for the exhibitors from 2008 to 2009. High retention levels and exhibitor surveys indicate that the Annual Conference & Expo continues to be a premier opportunity for technology managers, users, and manufacturers to meet and develop valuable relationships.

The International Certification Commission (ICC) certification programs, (CBET, CRES, and CLES) for which AAMI serves as Secretariat, continue to experience growth in both applications (more than 400 in 2008) and in renewal rates (more than 80% for 2008). This increase in activity serves as an indicator of the positive reputation these certifications have earned as a demonstration of an individual's dedication to and knowledge of the field. Leadership for these programs continues to work to maintain the integrity of the program through constant evaluation of content and procedures.

In the publications arena, AAMI's peer-reviewed journal—*Biomedical Instrumentation & Technology (BI&T)*—has continued to expand with the addition of two new regular columns focused on imaging and sterilization issues. Each issue of *BI&T* now features more than 20 regular timely columns to meet the practical needs of AAMI's diverse membership.

In 2008, AAMI also released *Future Horizons*, which explored the next 40 years in medical technology, and the 4th edition of the popular *IT Horizons*, which delved into the new challenges and opportunities posed by the in-

formation technology (IT) advancements in healthcare. Both publications were mailed to all AAMI members and distributed widely at educational events and to local biomedical organizations.

IT Horizons also marked the first accomplishment of the new CE-IT Community—a collaboration among AAMI, the American College of Clinical Engineering (ACCE), and the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS). The CE-IT Community is developing IT-related guidance documents, sharing best practices on IT issues, and seeking to resolve timely and critical IT issues facing healthcare technology professionals.

The Technology Management Council (TMC)—a 24-member committee that develops benefits and services and promotes networking opportunities for those who manage and maintain medical technology—maintained a busy schedule in 2008. Over the last year, the TMC launched *AAMI's Benchmarking Solution*—a new online self-assessment tool to help clinical engineering departments benchmark their processes, policies, and procedures against similar departments at other facilities; monitor progress throughout the year; and share best practices. This new tool seeks to address a gaping need within the field, where previous benchmarking efforts have struggled because responsibilities, consistent measures, and data vary significantly from one facility to the next.

Another major TMC goal is to develop and enhance the profession, for example, through National Biomedical/Clinical Engineering Appreciation Week, which was celebrated this year from May 10–16. The TMC also updated and released the second edition of its popular brochure promoting the field as a career option. More than 30,000 copies of that brochure have been distributed by schools, hospitals, and manufacturers to promote the profession. An important measure of progress is the recent article in *US News and World Report* that, for the second year in a row, recognized the biomedical equipment technician (BMET) career as one of the most desirable occupations in the country.

Plans for Our Future

As AAMI moves forward, there are plans under way to grow existing programs and evaluate new programs that promise to advance our members' interests.

An exciting initiative in the standards arena may see AAMI playing a larger role in the efforts to move

healthcare toward the use of electronic patient records. The Obama administration and others are considering new functionality for electronic patient records. In early 2009, leadership from the U.S. technical advisory groups (TAGs) for IEC/SC 62A (electrical equipment), administered by AdvaMed; ISO/TC 210 (quality management), administered by AAMI; and ISO/TC 215 (healthcare informatics), administered by HIMSS, met to discuss areas of mutual interest and potential overlapping scopes of activity. Safety standards for medical device software are already covered by joint work between IEC/SC 62A and ISO/TC 210. There are more than 60 new or revised standards projects in the pipeline this year.

In the education arena, AAMI will focus on expanding educational programs while also creating new venues to increase access, value, and affordability. In the future, more webinars will be offered focusing on key sterilization issues. Already this year, a five-part webinar series was offered specifically on the steam sterilization standard ST79. This webinar series is being supported and co-sponsored by four other leading organizations in the sterilization field. Online communities are also being introduced in the areas of quality systems and technology management, whereby AAMI members can ask questions and provide guidance on topics of the day.

AAMI's educational programs regularly invite U.S. and foreign industry representatives and regulators to participate as instructors, speakers, observers, and learners. Goals are to increase participation by FDA, foreign governments, and industry in standards-based programs; increase AAMI's relationship and credibility with governments; and foster participation and commitment of governments to AAMI's goals and programs.

For the Annual Conference & Expo, there will be a strong focus on the impact of the economy on the medical technology management field; this year's conference will provide valuable tools to attendees to help them during these challenging times.

Several new publications are under development. In addition, Editorial Board members and staff will step back to take a broad look at AAMI publications to ensure that online and print publications are meeting the specific needs of all segments of the AAMI membership.

AAMI will launch two new online newsletters for professionals interested in quality systems issues and sterilization matters. This year will also see the development and release of two new editions of *Horizons*—one publi-

cation focusing on imaging issues and the other focusing on issues of mutual interest to nurses and biomed.

The TMC has a full list of projects to tackle this year. In addition to continuing the rollout of *AAMI's Benchmarking Solution*, the TMC will expand its online resources to enable AAMI members to share best practices and tools. An expansion of AAMI's mentoring program is planned, along with new resources for biomedical societies. The TMC is also working with educators to create a new student-oriented website to reach students who are considering the clinical engineering or biomedical equipment technology field as a career option. Also under evaluation are programs to create a video of "a day in the life" of a biomed; a "diplomat" program that identifies an AAMI advocate at selected schools; student chapters; and recruiting and training programs for mid-career professionals entering the biomed profession.

This year marks the fifth year anniversary of the TMC. As a result, the group will embark on a major survey of AAMI members to assess the value of its projects and evaluate other potential new TMC-oriented member benefits, services, and projects for the future.

A Final Farwell

I am proud to see that the depth and breadth of AAMI's programs and services continue to expand to meet the needs of our members and the goal of advancing medical instrumentation. As AAMI moves into the future, I am certain that the board, staff, volunteers, and new president will continue the work that I undertook along with AAMI's founders more than 40 years ago.

Now, as I move into retirement, I am looking forward to spending more time with my five grandchildren and three great grandchildren, golfing a bit more, and catching up on my reading.

Looking back to 1969, I am glad that Dwight Harken talked me into accepting this position. The experience over the years has been amazing. It has brought me into contact with legendary leaders in medicine, nursing, industry, and government. Where else could I have helped make important things happen and make contacts with people like that? I am grateful for the opportunity to have played a role in advancing medical technology for the benefit of all of us. Thank you all, and best wishes for a bright future. ■

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