

## How is AsMA Run?

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I remember the first time I attended an Annual Scientific Meeting of AsMA. It was full of people, all of whom seemed to know what was going on, while I could only focus on making sure I knew the right place and time to give my presentation. I went to the talks of my colleagues, the plenary lectures, and the other presentations relevant to my area of work. There were one or two social events, the Welcome Reception and the Honors Night, but really I had little idea how it all came about. Societies, Lunches, and Business meetings were all a mystery to me. So I thought I should write something here for those who are new to AsMA, our journal, and our meetings. If we can encourage further engagement from those who are joining in for the first time, it strengthens our Association, just as it provides them with stepping stones to a new career or a new aspect of their existing one.

AsMA is a membership organization with its headquarters, the Home Office, in Alexandria, VA. The dedication of the Home Office staff and their "corporate knowledge" of the Association is tremendous and their loyalty outstanding. Our staff, led by the Executive Director, keep the business of the Association running on a day-to-day basis throughout the year. They deal with membership, produce our journal, interact with other organizations, and maintain the essential financial operations.

You can join the Association at our meetings or at any time via the AsMA website ([www.asma.org](http://www.asma.org)). There are a few membership stipulations but most readers will meet one or other of them. We are a broad community with professional groups spanning many career fields, sharing a passion for the flight environment and all it implies in medicine, physiology, psychology, and engineering. So we include nurses, doctors, and physicians' assistants, a range of scientists from physiologists to human factors specialists, and many others.

The elected officers of the Association, drawn from all these groups, are led by the President, who serves a 1-year term and precedes that with a year as President Elect (and Vice President for Governance). The President is also supported on the Executive Committee (ExCom) by another four Vice Presidents (International, Membership, Education and Research, and Representation and Advocacy), a Treasurer, Secretary, and three Members at Large chosen by that year's President from those on Council. The ExCom meet face to face twice a year but now also have video conferences as well as frequent e-mail communication. The Executive Director attends these meetings in a non-voting capacity. Many of the day to day decisions are made by ExCom, but matters affecting policy and financial direction have to be agreed to at Council, the governing body of the Association and will be reported to the annual Business meeting, held during the Annual Scientific Meeting, to which all members of the Association are welcome and should attend whenever possible. Some voting decisions can

only be taken at the Business meeting, such as the election of officers proposed by the Nominating Committee or others nominated by members in advance.

Council is a large committee including the whole of the ExCom and the immediate Past President, together with representatives from the Fellows, Associate Fellows, American Board of Preventive Medicine, Residents and students, and each of the 12 Constituent organizations, plus the 12 Members at Large (normally 4 chosen each year for a 3-year term). The Parliamentarian keeps an eye on the running of the meeting and decisions taken but does not have a vote. The Executive Director and the Editor of our journal are there too (also without votes).

Anyone can become involved as a member of a constituent organization, which each have their own specific aims and interests, or through helping with one of the many committees that support AsMA, from the recruitment of new members, the registration of attendees at our meetings, the selection of award winners, or the drafting of resolutions that state the position of our Association on an important aeromedical issue. Each committee reports to a specific Vice President, who acts as their voice on Council and ExCom. We cannot function without this quiet, consistent volunteer endeavor within our committees. It is appreciated and noticed by the AsMA leadership. In future editions of this page I would like to include a few lines from our committees so that their work is more widely seen. I am keen that those who contribute should benefit from individual advice and encouragement. They should be supported in becoming an Associate Fellow and ultimately a Fellow of AsMA. It is from the ranks of those who make contributions that the future leaders will come, helping to shape this organization so it can support its membership and be a positive force for good for the various flying communities we serve.

So, for example, if you would like to help select the abstracts for future meetings (Scientific Programming Committee) or choose the music for the after party on Honors Night (Arrangements Committee) there is a place for you to help. When you realize what AsMA can mean in a professional's life you may wish to join the Membership Committee, to help spread that message and to help the Association grow further. Whatever your interests and talents, there is a place for you.



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