

Time to Plan, Time to Engage, Time to Promote

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This page is being written at a time when all our U.S. readers will be celebrating the 4th of July. I have fond memories of spending a July 4th holiday weekend in New York City, a few years ago, where the atmosphere was fun, the fireworks spectacular, and a great welcome extended to our visiting group of U.K. military personnel. This welcoming attitude and the feeling of fun has characterized many trips to the U.S., but none more so than at our own annual meetings. There, a large group of old friends and new faces gather to learn, to network, and to catch up on professional as well as personal news. So as you read this I hope I can encourage you to not only plan to be in the great city of Denver for our meeting (29 April – 4 May 2017) but also now to turn your attention to submitting an abstract for a presentation. The closing date for submission will be 31 October, but there is no time like the present for gathering the material together and starting to draw up an abstract in which you can succinctly describe what you have done in your own respective fields.

That brings me to the topic of this page. We have chosen the theme of “Opening the Doors to Aerospace Medicine” for this year and the annual scientific meeting. Just as hangar doors open to reveal the air or spacecraft within and allow it to take off, to fly, so our meeting can open up new adventures and new territories to explore. With such a large meeting, containing up to seven parallel sessions, there is a tendency to go to the sessions and even individual papers directly pertinent to our own area of professional interest. The same can be true of poster sessions; when time is tight there is a tendency to focus on the ones that might impact our daily work. I encourage you all to come to the meeting but would also suggest that you take a step outside your specialist area and just drop into a session or two that is unrelated to your current area of work. That way you get a chance to be inspired by a topic or area unfamiliar to you. And I believe you may be surprised that when you do, ideas of synergy will come to mind and your own work may take off in different directions. It might just make you look at things afresh or you could take the opportunity to collaborate with a new group of professionals working in a field of endeavor related to, but somewhat different from, your own.

I also appeal to you to think even wider. Almost every month I see papers published in journals, other than our own, on topics

that are related to aerospace medicine and the science that underpins it. These may have been authored, at least in part, by members of our aerospace community, but frequently they are written by those who have not really been exposed previously to aerospace medicine and science but something in their practice or study has arisen which is worthy of publication. These groups are working hard within their own discipline and keeping up with the requirements for pertinent CME so may not immediately see the opportunity and benefits that attendance at an AsMA meeting can offer. I believe this is a diverse professional community to whom we should reach out and bring along to our varied and valuable scientific output. So our colleagues in internal medicine, anesthetics, intensivists, psychologists, physiologists, and more, need to have our scientific offering brought to their attention. If each of us recruits a new, first time attendee from outside aerospace medicine, we will have done a lot to extend the reach of our valuable scientific and medical outputs to the wider professional communities as well as having refreshed the body of knowledge and expertise represented within our own society. For too long, perhaps, we have been almost shy of telling our professional peers that what is done in aerospace medicine impacts so many people and addresses a huge range of essential aspects of human performance in health and disease that they should come along to have their eyes opened to what we have available.

If we all do this we will bring more people to the party and make them welcome. When they go home, they will reflect on the value of what they have learned, the professional groups they have met, and the experience gained. Some will join AsMA, which will be a great boost to the efforts of our Membership Committee, but let us make sure that all carry away a good impression of what we, as members of this multi-disciplinary group, deliver every day in our work and what the Association itself delivers to the body of knowledge in aerospace medicine.

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