The AsMA Global Connection Story with IAASM

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Today I have an interview for our Journal with Melchor J. Antuñano, M.D., M.S., the President of one of the main aerospace medicine associations in the world, the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine. I feel very connected with this association as an Academician but also because it was co-founded by



Dr. Allard, the head of the medical service of SABENA, the former national Belgian airline, for which I worked for some 10 years. I just missed meeting him as he had passed away a few years earlier.

So, Melchor, please tell us a bit about yourself.

I was born in Mexico City and before going to medical school I volunteered as a paramedic and as an emergency medical technician at a Red Cross clinic

Melchor J. Antuñano

in Mexico, and I was also a member of a rescue team. I didn't know at that point in time that there was such a thing as a combination of aerospace medicine or aviation medicine. I am a graduate of the National Autonomous University of Mexico School of Medicine. I was in the middle of medical school when I learned about aviation medicine - the combination of my two areas of interest. In my social service year, I volunteered to work for the Mexican Government's National Center of Aviation Medicine (CENMA) in Mexico City, where I learned about aviation medicine, aircraft accident investigation, and pilot medical certification. I completed the Residency Program in Aerospace Medicine at Wright State University in Dayton, OH. I was awarded a post-doctoral research associateship by the U.S. National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences at the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine in San Antonio, TX.

I am a Fellow and Past President of the Aerospace Medical Association, Past President of the Space Medicine Society, Past President of the Iberoamerican Association of Aerospace Medicine, and member of the International Academy of Astronautics. I am also this year's President of the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine

And what you are doing in your daily work?

Since I joined the FAA Civil Aerospace Medical Institute (CAMI) in 1992, I have led efforts to expand our international

impact. CAMI has been the role model for other countries. We bring representatives from other countries, some spending up to 2 years at CAMI to learn how we do business, so when they return home, they



implement similar programs and/or improve their existing programs in their own countries. We also assist foreign civil aviation authorities, providing consultation on complex pilot medical certification cases. Over the years, we have trained thousands of foreign aviation professionals in the areas of aviation medicine, aviation physiology, global survival, aviation human factors, cabin safety, crashworthiness and biodynamics, aviation toxicology, and so on. We have made a big difference around the world, but we need to expand even more.

I am currently the Director of CAMI. I provide executive direction and I am responsible for the oversight of the FAA Office of Aerospace Medicine's programs in Medical Certification, Medical Education, Medical Research, Human Factors Research, and Occupational Health Services. These include:

- 1) a program to fulfill the aeromedical certification needs of approximately 500,000 holders of U.S. pilot certificates;
- a program for the selection, designation, training, and management of about 3,000 Aviation Medical Examiners (AMEs) appointed to conduct physical examinations and issue FAA medical certificates to U.S. pilot certificate holders throughout the U.S. and in 90 countries worldwide;
- aeromedical education programs in aviation physiology, global survival, and aviation human factors for FAA flight crews and civil aviation pilots;
- aerospace medical publications and other didactic materials used to disseminate medical information to promote aerospace safety;
- 5) a highly specialized library system in support of a broad range of aerospace medical and aerospace safety reference/ research programs;
- 6) an integrated program of field and laboratory performance research in organizational and human factors aspects of aerospace work environments;

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- an applied research program to identify human tolerances, capabilities, and failure modes (physiological, psychological, and performance) both in uneventful flights, and during civilian in-flight incidents and accidents;
- 8) an occupational medicine program to improve the safety of FAA employees at the FAA Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center (MMAC); and
- 9) a medical clinic that provides health services to approximately 5,000 employees and students at the MMAC.

What exactly is the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine and what is its role?

The Palazzo Doria Pamphilj in Rome, Italy, with its very extensive collection of painting and sculpture masterpieces was a unique and impressive location to conduct the official ceremony for my installation as the new President of the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine (IAASM). Founded in 1955, IAASM promotes the field of Aerospace Medicine and allied disciplines through international collaboration. This Academy is a unique professional organization, different in scope and purpose from all other medical societies, and those differences contribute to its organizational strength. Compared to other professional medical organizations IAASM has a relatively small group of outstanding leaders and professionals dedicated to Aerospace Medicine and allied disciplines around the world, and such a close network of colleagues makes it possible to have an impact on a global scale. Membership is limited to 275 colleagues from around the world.

What is your and their relationship with AsMA, and how long has it existed?

AsMA and the IAASM have a long history of interactions over the years because many of the same Aerospace Medicine colleagues have been involved with the management and leadership of both organizations. For many years, the IAASM has held mid-year business meetings (committees, executive council, and general assembly) in conjunction with the annual scientific meeting of AsMA. In addition, for the last several years, the AsMA Executive Director has attended the International Congress of Aviation and Space Medicine (ICASM) to maintain a joint presence and support. Furthermore, most IAASM members are also AsMA members.

What already works well in this relationship and what could be improved or intensified in our collaboration?

Due to the long-term history of joint membership and, in many cases, shared leadership of both organizations, together with the international scope of both organizations, there is a significant overlap of common goals and interests to promote the development of aerospace medicine and to support the training and preparation of the next generation of aerospace medicine professionals. We need to work on better ways to communicate our respective short and long-term goals and objectives.

Do you have any ideas for AsMA? For our support to your association, and/or for the dissemination of information from your association?

One idea to improve communications between AsMA and IAASM could involve sharing the minutes of the AsMA Council and the IAASM Executive Council to identify areas of shared interest and potential collaboration. Another idea worth exploring is that AsMA and IAASM could share membership lists to invite all members to our respective scientific events to promote attendance. Obviously, we are going to explore the possibility of holding joint scientific meetings between AsMA, ESAM, and IAASM every other year.

What is your personal involvement in AsMA? Do you have any further plans?

Here is a summary of my most important AsMA activities: Past President, Vice President, Nominating Committee member and chair, Member to Council, Advisory Editorial Board member, Fellows Scholarship Committee chair, board member of the AsMA Foundation. I plan to continue performing these functions as long as I can make positive contributions.

Melchor, many thanks for your impressive contributions to AsMA in many functions, and for your positive ideas for more international collaboration between the existing associations – we from AsMA will certainly support this goal!