

And the Theme for Atlanta Is...Selection!

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The 91st Annual Scientific Meeting next year is going to be at the Hyatt Regency in Atlanta, GA, my home town. Atlanta has some fantastic things to see and do. It is the home of Coca-Cola, with the "World of Coca-Cola" museum just four blocks from the Hyatt. Centennial Olympic Park is only three blocks away. The Georgia Aquarium and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights only a block or two further. For news junkies, tours are available for the CNN studios just one more block away. Historic Underground Atlanta is just over a half a mile away. After the Civil War devastation, the city started to rebuild itself around new railroad tracks bringing goods and people to the city. In the late 1920s, the city built a series of viaducts over the railroad tracks and buildings to relieve downtown traffic congestion. The remaining storefronts, below the viaducts, largely in Victorian style, date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Now it is a shopping and entertainment district. It should be an awesome time in my home town. For the record, I didn't get to pick Atlanta as our meeting location just for my tenure as president! The location was actually selected about 5 years ago by the Executive Committee based on bids from multiple cities. It is serendipity that we are in the town of my birth.

So now that the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce has had its say about the location, it's time to consider the content for next year's meeting. One of the duties of the president is to come up with a theme for the annual meeting. Hmmm. A theme, eh? That means a bit of pondering and cogitating on things that our membership might find interesting or compelling. What would the typical Aeromedical practitioner like to hear? What is going on that is relevant and current for their practice in 2020? What big trends are happening in our business that our members should be aware of? What kind of cutting edge information would the membership find interesting? What sort of novel initiatives have been undertaken by military services or commercial entities that have potential to change our practices? What general areas of knowledge should we tap into for furthering aeromedical practice? And then what sort of speakers could/would submit their work in the "themed area" in abstract form to present at the meeting?

Here I am, back at an entirely too long list of questions. So I went back and re-read another long list of questions in my first President's Page. I seem to be quite adept at developing questions; not so good at answering them. How then to approach this? The outline from that first article seemed like a good framework to work from. Additionally, AsMA collects and reviews the post-meeting survey data from all attendees about what they'd like to see next year. Putting the survey answers in the hopper of my fertile imagination, along with the latest set of

questions/misunderstandings/interesting initiatives led me to favor the first item of my six-step framework—selection.

Medical standards for selection have a long history in our specialty. But the rationale and methodology used in developing standards are not well trained or well understood by most. Additionally, those who are selected get specific training on how to keep themselves healthier, how to make themselves better, stronger, more effective. Some organizations have made some unique (some might say "radical") changes in their training platforms and resources. So selection coupled with operationally focused training is the area that I chose for focus this year. It is the initial entry point for the major portion of our populations.

So in 2020, the 91st Annual Scientific Meeting will be held in Atlanta's Hyatt Regency Hotel. This year's theme is "Optimizing Human Performance via Selection & Training." Here is the instructional paragraph that we developed.

Aerospace Medicine rests on a foundation of traditional clinical medicine but goes well beyond. Selection standards are largely based on threats and risks to operational tasks at hand. Training for operators and controllers on physiological limitations and countermeasures has been a mainstay of optimizing performance. Protective equipment (technology) and Rules of Engagement (policy) add extra rigor in further enhancing human performance. But selection and training are "before the bang," that is, prior to the actual need for maximum performance. This year, we seek unique or novel combinations of medicine, engineering, physiology, psychology, nursing, and social sciences that better select and train individuals for maximum performance, both within the aerospace world and from other operations that have high performance demands. Individuals and groups outside of aerospace medicine may offer successful solutions, approaches, or perspectives that could be leveraged by aviation or space operations for optimizing performance. You may learn a novel way to optimize your specific operations. Join us in Atlanta.

Get your thinking caps on and put together the latest innovations you and your colleagues are implementing in the selection



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and training realms. Start polishing up those abstracts! The deadline for abstract submission is creeping up fast – November 1, 2019. And Pam Day says “NO EXCEPTIONS!”

I'm hoping the Services (both U.S. and international) will chime in with waiver criteria and standards-based topics, as well as Ft. Rucker, Pensacola, and Wright-Patt (Wright-Patterson AFB). I will specifically contact several medical standards agencies that don't typically attend our meeting to see if they can put together some presentations with data and risk assessment rationale. And a big, BIG thanks in advance to all of you who take up

the challenge to present in Atlanta on selection and training activities in Aerospace Medicine.

But that's still not the end of it. The President has to select the actual lecturers for the plenary sessions, as well. And try to match them with the theme s/he just picked out! Hmmmm. What kind of speakers have the background, knowledge, topic, speaking skills, even panache, to inform, educate, and entertain the audience? This is a toughie. More pondering (with fewer questions, I hope.)

So my work isn't done yet—just this edition of the President's Page. 'Til next time ... keep 'em flying out there.