

Odds

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Welcome to the Abstracts edition of the Journal. I will keep my comments brief, since as usual this edition is choc-a-bloc with a wide array of abstracts and posters that cover a host of topics that are far more interesting. This edition always leaves me torn between wanting to attend two or more papers or sessions being presented at the same time.

Our annual scientific meeting is, in many senses, a “celebration” of science and the scientific method. Oh, yes, there are plenty of opportunities and venues within medical conferences for expression of individual opinions. But our annual meeting reinforces the importance of the scientific method as we know it (or as I understand it) in advancing knowledge. Start with an idea or concept. Pose it as a question. Transform it into a null hypothesis. Develop a method to test that hypothesis. Gather and analyze data. Review the results and then discuss, including limitations and potential next topics for study. Submit for consideration in a peer-reviewed journal. Receive feedback from objective, independent reviews. Revise and re-submit. Get published or presented. Get feedback from the scientific community. If needed, publish corrections. Re-think. Consider next research questions to restart the cycle of scientific inquiry. Data begets information begets knowledge. Of course, as humans we always struggle to use that knowledge wisely.

And that is how we do business at AsMA. I am always impressed by the rigor of our publication process, and especially the November annual review of abstracts considered for the annual scientific meeting. We’ve come a long way and continue to refine the process. I particularly like the fact that submissions are reviewed “blind” without knowing the identity of the authors to preserve the objectivity of the reviews.

By way of comparison, I am dismayed by the plethora of studies published today that claim to be scientific but are not. One recent example examined an aspect of COVID and garnered quite a bit of media attention in the United States. While a lot of work and effort went into the study, it clearly did not follow the scientific method.

No null hypothesis. Unclear methodology. Inclusion of many “working papers” and other studies not peer reviewed. A rather (in my opinion) confusing organization. And direct-to-web release prior to any obvious or apparent peer review process. I will say that the statistical graphics appeared impressive and might be considered a triumph of readily available modern statistical tools. In the end, though, to me nothing but blogging transmogrified into the appearance of science.

Having reviewed many (but only a fraction) of the abstract submissions during the November abstract review, I think you will be pleased with the diversity and quality of this year’s submissions. Of course, the breadth of topics is enhanced by our partnership with the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society (UHMS) at this year’s meeting. The inclusion of an additional track for UHMS-focused papers will pleasantly add to your conundrum of which sessions to attend and provide us all with broader food for thought.

I believe the abstracts herein will whet your appetite for attending the meeting in Reno. *Odds* are you will find the plenary sessions very stimulating and will set the stage for thinking about where aerospace, undersea, and hyperbaric medicine and human performance will be in 10 years. *Odds* are that you will be stimulated by good science, the opportunity to test your own thoughts and knowledge against your peers. *Odds* are you will enjoy reacquainting in person with friends and colleagues. *Odds* are you will be refreshed by getting to meet and know the new generation of undergraduates, postgraduates, and residents in our community. *Odds* are that this meeting will herald ongoing greater collaboration between AsMA and UHMS. *Odds* are you will enjoy the Peppermill Resort and all that Reno has to offer. See you in Reno!



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