2009 will likely be remembered by most physicians for the turmoil of “Health Care Reform” and the downturn of our economy. The changing scenario in American politics will no doubt insure continued controversy and distraction by these topics for a while. However, 2009 should be remembered for the significant work by many to further mature and grow our academy.

Over 25 years ago, the American Academy of Pain Medicine (AAPM) started as the American College of Algology. Our Academy, however, has grown far from the days where a small group of individuals control its fate. As the size of our academy grows and the projects we are involved in multiplies, the complexity of maintaining order out of chaos increases. In 2009, I am proud to say the board of directors of AAPM has worked to ensure that a professional society such as ours maintains its ability to function in these times of both regulatory and economic challenges.

An association of professionals spread out across the country is by its nature, a disparate group. Pulling together as a single unit with a coherent purpose can be difficult. Technology helps of course, but technology can take us only so far. I strongly believe that we need to focus on our communication with one another, particularly the communication within the AAPM leadership and between the leadership and its members. If we are to continue to succeed as a leader in pain medicine, our communication infrastructure must remain strong.

Communication Goals

As a result, to ensure that our internal communication is all that it should be, several goals have been set for the AAPM leadership. The goals are as follows:

1. Improve communication between committees. Committees with interrelated tasks have been encouraged to talk to one another to facilitate the sharing of ideas and results to avoid duplication of efforts. I would like to ensure that committees that need help from other committees are able to communicate that need and obtain collaborative results.

2. Improve communication between committees and the board. It is essential that the board’s goals are clearly communicated to the committees charged with carrying out those goals and that the committees are able in turn to get from the board what they need to carry out their responsibilities.

3. Improve transparency. Crucial to our membership is the need to demonstrate what the leadership is doing, how they are doing it, and the impact it has on the membership. I want to encourage the sharing of ideas, best practices, and expertise between the members and the leadership.

4. Increase ability to find future leaders. Continuing the efforts initiated by our immediate past president, Dr. Rollin Gallagher, AAPM will strive to improve recruiting outreach, develop enhanced leadership training, and create specific leadership succession tracks for its leaders. By executing these new guidelines, I believe that we will improve our ability to develop future leaders who will further the organization’s goals.

Communication Solutions

To achieve those goals, the following steps have been solidified:

1. Committee/board forum. At the annual meeting, where I first outlined these goals, the first ever AAPM committee/board forum was hosted. It was attended by committee chairs and board members to foster communication between the two groups. My hope is that we will continue the dialogue among the leadership that this meeting initiated. I especially want to ensure that the committee chairs who do not serve on the board are given ample opportunity to communicate with the board.

2. Board liaisons. To ensure ongoing communication between committees and the board, board liaisons have been assigned to each of the committees. The liaisons are board members who are assigned to one or more committees and are responsible for maintaining communication with that committee(s). The board liaisons will report on committee contact/activities at each board meeting.

3. Website redesign. A redesign of the AAPM website is well underway. A component of that redesign includes a means for using this forum to facilitate committee work. I believe that there is much that the technology can offer us in bringing geographically widespread committee members closer together as they work to achieve our goals. Conducting committee work through the website will improve committee transparency to our members.
2010 Committee Chairs

An Academy such as ours is only as strong as the members involved. The following members have graciously agreed to serve as committee chairs:

Annual Meeting Program
Tim Lamer, MD, and Sunil Panchal, MD, co-chairs

Awards
Rollin M. Gallagher, MD, MPH

Business Oversight
Todd Sitzman, MD, MPH

By-Laws
Michel Y. Dubois, MD

CME Oversight
Dana Simon, MD

Coding and Reimbursement
Eduardo M. Fraifeld, MD, chair
Fred Davis, MD, vice chair

Communications
John Peppin, DO, FACP

Educational Programs
Vitaly Gordin, MD

Medical School Curriculum Task Force
Beth Murinson, MD, THP

Ethics Council
Larry Driver, MD

External Affairs
Norman Marcus, MD

Finance Committee
Lynn Webster, MD

Legislative and Regulatory Affairs
Scott Fishman, MD

Local Initiatives
Michael Brennan, MD

Membership
Thomas Yearwood, MD, PhD

Nominating
Rollin M. Gallagher, MD, MPH

Primary Care Shared Interest Group
Matthew Bair, MD, MS
Bill McCarberg, MD

Research
Alex Cahana, MD, and Ajay Wasan, MD MSc, co-chairs

Scientific Poster Abstract Sub-Committee
Jeff Tiede, MD

Scientific Review and Guidelines
Timothy Deer, MD, and Sean Mackey, MD, PhD, co-chairs

Site Selection
Donna Bloodworth, MD

Strategic Planning
Perry Fine, MD

I want to thank all of our committee chairmen and chairwomen, as well as all those members who have agreed to serve on the committees. It is your hard work and dedication that allows us to grow and continue our goals of education, promotion of our specialty, and ultimately to provide better care for our patients. I look forward to working with you to accomplish AAPM’s many important goals. Without your willingness to serve the Academy, none of the significant progress we have made, and will continue to make, as an organization would be possible.

Strategic Planning Goals

In 2007, the AAPM developed a 3-year strategic plan that set Academy priorities, established goals, and mapped out a way forward for our organization. Rather than take on all of these goals at once, the organization chose to phase them in gradually over 3 years. Now that our earlier goals have been achieved, I am pleased to announce that we are implementing two new goals in 2010: further developing educational programs and examining the AAPM’s long-term financial security.

Our plan is to continue development of education programs that will benefit three groups: AAPM members, the medical community at large, and medical care consumers. We intend to collaborate with other pain care organizations to develop and publish clinical guidelines on pain medicine, which will benefit our members. We also intend to develop courses in pain management that will be useful for anyone involved in practicing pain medicine, which will benefit both our members and those medical practitioners who are not AAPM members. These courses will offer another great opportunity for AAPM to continue the dialog between primary care physicians and pain medicine specialists. Finally, we will continue to make pain care information available through our website, benefitting the general public. To date, the website already incorporates a feature for the public to find a pain medicine physician in their community. There is still much to do to achieve this goal, but our progress holds great promise for benefiting AAPM members, the medical community, and the public, all while raising the AAPM’s profile.

In terms of the financial security goal, we will be taking a closer look at a variety of revenue-generating possibilities. A committee has been appointed to take a long-term look at AAPM’s financial prospects. This committee will be responsible for examining various revenue initiatives, such as those involving quality programming, and identifying which initiatives are the most promising.
Communication is the key. I want to thank all the individuals involved in producing a fantastic annual meeting, and to reiterate my thanks to every AAPM volunteer for their valuable time to our cause. I would also encourage members who would like to volunteer for committee work, to consider doing so in the future. We have much to do, and by pulling together and continuing with our commitment to keep the communication channels open, I believe that all our shared goals are achievable.

EDUARDO M. FRAIFELD, M.D.
President, AAPM