

Message From the Chair



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to ASHP's newest Section and for many of you a long awaited welcome home. The opportunity to be the first to address the Section of Informatics and Technology is truly an honor. As I read through the discussions on our active list serve I am humbled by the wealth and depth of knowledge as well as the vast experience of those overseeing systems supporting the medication use process. Before discussing our current course I must recognize ASHP leadership and all ASHP members specifically the Section of Pharmacy Practice Managers and the Informatics Section Advisory Group for making this Section a reality. Through their visionary leadership they were able to create and articulate a realistic, credible, attractive vision for ASHP's role in the field of pharmacy informatics. They recognized the increasingly pervasive role of computing and information technology in the management of medications and more importantly that the design of this technology is not solely a technical matter, but must focus on the relationship between the technology and its use in a clinical practice setting.

ASHP leaders have appointed the interim Executive Committee that will serve as leadership for the Section until elections are held in July 2007. Karl Gumpfer has joined the ASHP staff as the Director for our section. Karl was previously the Director of Pharmacy at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and brings strong leadership and commitment to our team. For those of you who don't have time to peruse the web site I have included the appointed members of the interim Executive Committee below.

- Scott R. McCreadie, Pharm.D., Strategic Project Coordinator at the University of Michigan Health System (Vice-Chair);
- James L. Besier, Ph.D., Assistant Director of Pharmacy at the Cincinnati Health Alliance (Director-at-Large);
- Brent Fox, Pharm.D., Ph.D., Visiting Professor at Auburn University (Director-at-Large);
- Denis J. (Jeff) Ramirez, Pharm.D., Associate Chief Consultant, Clinical Information Systems, Pharmacy Benefits Management, Veterans Health Administration (Director-at-Large);
- Michael D. Schlesselman, Pharm.D., Director of Pharmacy at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital (Director-at-Large).

The Section's interim Executive Committee has already begun fulfilling their roles and responsibilities by drafting the strategic direction that includes our mission, vision and current goals and objectives. These goals and objectives have been crafted and aligned with broader organizational goals to help maintain our focus. The plan maintains a common theme that revolves around system and data integration as well as the development of tools that accommodate common processes, best practices and quality and safety across the medication use process. From a clinical practice perspective the plan includes the use of technology to improve organizational performance and outcomes in clinical practice, including improvements in patient safety through reduced medication errors. From a technology management perspective the plan focuses on establishing shared medication data infrastructures that includes the identification of key medication related data items and the development of consistent definitions of those data items. The Executive Committee will oversee the strategic plan implementation and progress on strategic priority projects. They will ensure clear project definition, accountability, periodic assessment, and the recommendation of necessary resources. We will be most successful if we are able to demonstrate our commitment and develop an effective supportive infrastructure. This infrastructure will include the allocation of adequate resources to Section Advisory Groups (SAG's) to accomplish section goals and objectives that effectively integrate with other ASHP related priorities. It is critical that we utilize the experience, knowledge and talents of every member of our section to help accomplish goals and objectives. Section Advisory group formation and discussions are currently taking place with hopes for approval and request for participation this spring.

The efforts in drafting the Section's mission and vision statements are important starting points for our future however the dynamics of the healthcare IT environment dictates that this vision not be immortal. Everyone needs to struggle with the question of what kind of opportunities we want to create, and that vision is something that is alive and open to change. Our Section's vision will be an ongoing dialogue rather than a declaration.

Our first objective as a Section will be to continue to clearly communicate the vision not only in words but also through our actions that includes research, education and publication. We must continually convey and reinforce the vision and extend it to different leadership contexts so it can be applied and heard in various domains. Although Pharmacy informatics is a specialty it facilitates the integration of data, information, and knowledge to support pharmacists and other providers in every aspect of the medication use process suggesting that all members of ASHP actively participate. As our section continues to grow we must delegate responsibility, encourage members to exercise their initiative and foster innovation.

As we continue to move through the discovery phase of this new venture I look forward to treating each of our interactions as a learning event and hope to create an environment of high intensity yet balanced participation and active engagement. I hope to see you at the upcoming Summer Meeting, June 23-28 in San Francisco, CA!

Sincerely,

Mark H. Siska, B.S. Pharm., MBA/TM.

Assistant Director Informatics & Technology, Pharmacy Services, Mayo Clinic Rochester.

Chair, Section of Pharmacy Informatics and Technology (2007)

sections@ashp.org