



**Kevin J. Colgan, M.A., FASHP**  
**ASHP President**  
**Opening Session Welcome Remarks**  
**ASHP Summer Meeting 2009**  
**Monday, June 15**

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the staff at ASHP, I'd like to welcome you to Rosemont, and to ASHP's Summer Meeting!

I'm happy to be here for many reasons: for the cutting-edge educational content, for the stimulating policy discussions at the House of Delegates, for the poster sessions that showcase the research being done by younger pharmacists, and for the chance to see my many friends from across this country and those I've met internationally and to make some new ones.

Another happy duty I have this year is welcoming a new president to office. This meeting marks the official changing of the guard here at ASHP, and I'm excited to welcome my friend and colleague Lynnae Mahaney to the post. She'll be giving her inaugural address tomorrow morning at 10 past 10. I urge you all to come and hear what Lynnae has to say about how to become a “warrior” in today’s health-care profession.

Since I last spoke to you during the Opening Session of the Midyear Clinical Meeting in December, a lot has happened. We’ve had a whirlwind first six months of the year with a new president and a new Congress. We’ve lived through unprecedented economic challenges, both personally and professionally. And we experienced a global pandemic with the appearance of the H1N1 virus.

The ironic thing is that in the midst of all of this chaos, it’s never been a better time to be a pharmacist. There are so many opportunities for us to show how we improve patient safety and outcomes through rationale medication use. And it’s never been more critical to be a member of the community that is ASHP.

Take our new online discussion forum called ASHP Connect, for example. Members from all over the country are getting together in these virtual chat rooms to talk about everything from pharmacy leadership opportunities to clinical issues to how the economy has affected their practice sites. And we have a FaceBook and Twitter presence for this meeting to offer members another avenue to connect with each other and with ASHP.

You know, there's nothing like a crisis to get people working together and thinking in new and innovative ways. We recently conducted a survey of nearly 550 hospitals to find out how the economic downturn is affecting pharmacy departments. We asked about payroll and employment, cost and capital investments, pharmacy services, and education and professional development.

What we found was eye-opening. The survey revealed that 66 percent of respondents have been required to reduce drug budgets, 22 percent have frozen vacant positions, and 37 percent have cut staffing budgets. But the news is not all bad. Many members told us that the situation has created new opportunities for pharmacist leadership through their institutions with expansion of duties. So, that's an exciting and welcome development.

ASHP already used the survey results to help craft late-breaking sessions for this meeting on surviving and thriving in this difficult economic environment. And we'll be looking at a variety of new ways to help you keep on thriving over the coming months.

I do want you to know that you are not alone. The economic downturn that has affected all of our practice sites has affected ASHP, too. We've responded by getting leaner, doing things smarter, and focusing in on the activities, services and resources that you need and desire most.

What you will continue to find at ASHP is a heartfelt commitment to supporting you and your work to help patients. Together, we'll make it through these challenging times for not only health care, but for our entire nation and I'm convinced we'll become a stronger profession because of it.

I'm sure you've been following the national conversation about the future of health care in this country. President Obama and Congress have been moving at lightning fast speed to enact legislation that will reform our medical delivery system, expand health care coverage, and create a new financing structure.

ASHP has been working hard to be a part of this conversation.

For example, ASHP members represented you during three of the regional White House forums that took place this spring across the country. And we recently sent staff members to the White House to meet with President Obama's Health Care Reform Team. While there, we focused on the role that pharmacists play in safe and effective medication use. And we urged the administration to make sure that pharmacists' patient-care services are included in any plan that goes before Congress.

We are calling for a provision to Medicare Part D that mandates annual medication therapy review and assessment by a pharmacist. And we are continuing our work to add pharmacists as providers under Medicare Part B.

In addition, we are moving forward with legislation drafted late last year to restore

Medicare funding for postgraduate year two pharmacy residency programs.

We already know that we are having an impact because last week members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) committee released the “Affordable Health Choices Act.” The bill would create: (1) grants for pharmacist-provided medication therapy management services to chronically-ill patients; (2) community health teams, to provide transition care, including medication therapy management services under the medical home model; and (3) a national health care work force commission to gather information on work force supply, education and training capacity. To learn more, visit the ASHP website.

As you can imagine, there are many interested and powerfully connected parties that are clamoring for a seat at the table of health care reform, including patients, payers, and providers. But we are working hard to ensure that pharmacists are heard, too.

So, stay tuned for more to come on health care reform. And be assured that ASHP is absolutely dedicated to helping you do the best job possible for your patients. While you are working to keep your patients well, we are working to ensure that you have all the opportunities and resources you need as a clinician.

Thank you!