



A Monthly Newsletter from ADEA Executive Director Richard W. Valachovic, D.M.D., M.P.H.

*In this month's letter, Dr. Rick Valachovic, Executive Director of the American Dental Education Association, paints a picture of the 85th ADEA Annual Session held March 29-April 2 in Dallas.*



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### **Technology is Great, but People Still Need to Come Together Face-to-Face**

There's something that happens when you bring people together, something intangible that's easy to lose sight of when each of us is on our own. That something is the spirit of ADEA, both palpable and real. You could see it in the attentive faces of more than 1,800 participants, a record number, who came together in Dallas. And you could hear it articulated in the hallways and meeting rooms as we moved among nearly 300 different sessions.

For those of you who weren't able to join us, I'll try to convey a taste of what you missed. (For a look at what you missed, visit our [photo gallery](#).) Now, where to begin...

Dr. Atul Gawande's moving story about one doctor's persistence in treating a teen with cystic fibrosis and its implications for improving the quality of health care across all medical fields?

Marilyn Moats Kennedy's prognostications on how gender and generation will shape the workforce of the future?

James Carville's remarks about this watershed year in American politics? (If I hadn't just finished my morning coffee, I'd have sworn I was in a comedy club.)

Perhaps you're curious about the inaugural William J. Gies Awards for Vision, Innovation, and Achievement, a program of the ADEAGies Foundation. (Talk about excellent turnout! Nearly 800 participants and Dr. Gies's grandson took part in a gala awards celebration of the pioneering spirit and achievement that flourish in our community.)

Are you wondering what bologna sandwiches, a soccer field, and canned food have to do with any of this? (Each was involved in the weekend community service projects undertaken by our members through **ADEAassist**.)

Or what followed the announcement that Dr. Olav Alvares, Editor of ADEA's highly regarded *Journal of Dental Education*, is retiring? (As one attendee commented, an ovation fit for a rock star.)

There's more I could say about each of these topics, but right now I want to tell you about the opening of the ADEA House of Delegates, where Dr. Ron Hunt was elected the next ADEA President-elect and where ADEA's incoming president, Dr. Charles Bertolami, outlined his vision for the year ahead. Despite challenges to the profession around licensure issues, access to care, and market forces that are moving dentistry away from its roots as a learned profession, Dr. Bertolami expressed confidence that these threats could be minimized and even turned into opportunities for collaboration, interdisciplinary work, and an increased focus on prevention. He stressed the urgency of strengthening our already significant ties to organizations such as the National Institute for Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) and the

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) with which we can make common cause.

This need for a view of dentistry that extends beyond traditional boundaries was reflected in many of the presentations and workshops. How do we align our curricula with 21st century realities? Should we look to the medical education model in how we run our student clinics? Should we require a postgraduate year in dental education? Are new dental schools a way to nurture innovation? Can interprofessional collaboration through vehicles such as MedEdPORTAL, a joint initiative between ADEA and the Association of American Medical Colleges, get us where we need to go? How can our engagement in the growing movement to reform health care advance our educational mission and our long-term goal of facilitating access to oral health care for all?

And as always, there was this question: Who will pay? Fortunately, when it comes to Federal funding for Graduate Medical Education (GME), ADEA members have the benefit of an annual update from our legal counsel, Laura Loeb, a partner at King & Spalding, LLP. This year she shared the good news that opportunities still exist for new GME programs that have been hospital-funded from their inception.

Answering these and the other questions facing our community will require thinking outside the confines of dental education as we have come to know it. But with so many good minds working on these problems, I am convinced that we will eventually find solutions that can carry us forward into the future. With the expansion of our membership to include thousands of students, we have gained a wealth of new and energetic partners who are already assisting us in tackling some of the challenges within our profession.

A case in point—this year we witnessed the first ADEA Annual Session Future of the Professions plenary organized by the ADEA Council of Students. This session brought together members across age groups and professional roles and fostered interaction through ADEA's Audience Response System. Members continued the vital conversation about issues of ethics and professionalism and explored the potential effects stress, curriculum, and assessment might have.

A range of views also emerged around the move to a pass/no-pass system for national board exams, the value of lengthening dental education, and the importance of good role modeling. But everyone agreed on this: we need lots more intergenerational dialogue on these critical issues.

Also new this year was ADEA's first SoTLfest, an array of over three dozen events focused on the scholarship of teaching and learning. Interest in this certificate-earning opportunity surpassed expectations, moving the SoTLfest Symposium to a new venue when over 200 people turned up.

I want to take this opportunity to commend the ADEA Council of Faculties and the ADEA SoTL Community of Interest for organizing this vital programming, and while I'm at it, to thank our outgoing president Dr. Jim Swift, the ADEA Annual Session Planning Committee, and its chair extraordinaire Dr. Marnie Oakley for their exceptional work. Thanks also to the presenters, staff, volunteers, exhibitors, and sponsors whose insights, energy, and generosity made this ADEA Annual Session so successful.

For those of you who were unable to join us in Dallas or to make every session that caught your eye, you'll find 75 hours of ADEA Annual Session programming on the Web at the ADEA Live Learning Center. This member service is free and can be accessed at <http://www.softconference.com/adea>. You can also purchase CE credits at a discounted member rate. To learn more, contact Ms. Megan Maher, ADEA Professional Development Specialist, at <mailto:maherm@adea.org>.

If you've never attended the ADEA Annual Session before and this all sounds a bit overwhelming, don't despair. First-time attendee Prof. Kim Nguyen agrees but adds, "It's exciting!" A first-year professor in dental hygiene at Louisiana State University, Prof. Nguyen got help figuring out where to go and what to see from a denizen of the ADEA Annual Session.

Prof. Joan Pellegrini, Assistant Professor in the Division of Dental Hygiene at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry, has been coming to ADEA Annual Sessions since 1972. She says, "It's worth the cost of coming for the networking alone." She agreed to mentor one newcomer before

arriving in Dallas and took on a second, Prof. Nguyen, whom she met when they both volunteered to help the ADEA meetings staff. Now that's giving back!

Dr. Robert Arm, who runs a residency program at the Christiana Care Health System in Delaware, wanted to serve as a mentor last year, but a snowstorm got in the way. This year, he connected with Dr. Brian Singletary, Chief of Dentistry at Yale-New Haven Hospital. Dr. Singletary asked for a mentor because he is looking to make a greater contribution to the profession through ADEA. With Dr. Arm's encouragement, he agreed to serve as secretary of the ADEA Section on Postdoctoral General Dentistry, so very soon he will be doing just that.

Summer Totonchi was one of the youngest mentors at this year's Annual Session. A fourth-year student from Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine, her involvement with ADEA already includes stints as a school representative, a regional representative, and a member of the ADEA Annual Session Planning Committee. That's why she thought it would be a great idea to take someone under her wing. That person was Michael Syamken, a third-year student at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Dental Branch. He has only been an ADEA member for two years, but he's ready to follow in his mentor's footsteps.

Michael described his mentor's enthusiasm as "contagious." He's looking forward to representing his school and his region on the ADEA Council of Students and to strengthening the ADEA presence on his campus.

The importance of people coming together permeated the ADEA Annual Session. At a reception for newcomers, we listened in on a conversation between two students from Howard University. Sana Pasha attended last year's session and came back "so fired up" that her friend Janyn Baird joined her this time around. Janyn was impressed by what she saw. "This is a good organization that gets things done. It's made me realize that you can get involved in making real change." Janyn and Sana plan to encourage their fellow students to become active, too.

I can easily imagine these two and the other first-timers at next year's ADEA Annual Session with fellow students and colleagues in tow. I agree that our members' enthusiasm is contagious. Stay in touch, let us know how the staff in the Washington office of ADEA can help, and mark your calendars now for next year's gathering, March 14-18, 2009 in Phoenix. The theme for the 2009 ADEA Annual Session is "Imagine!"



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