



American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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It is my pleasure to speak to you and to share my thoughts on the accomplishments of the AASM in the past year and the challenges and opportunities of the coming year.

Sam provided an outstanding summary of what the AASM has accomplished in these turbulent times. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Sam for his leadership, dedication and hard work and for guiding me through all the complex issues that this position entails. It was my good fortune to work with Sam, I could not ask for a better teacher and friend.

Thirty years ago, on a cold cloudy morning a young physician, straight out of med school, boarded a flight to start his residency training in Chicago. As the plane soared through the clouds, he realized that the familiar was in the past, but he also learned that losing sight of the shore meant that he can NOW discover new horizons. Once in the new world, he learned that it did not matter where you started, but how you can make a difference.

While this is the narrative of America, it is also the narrative of sleep medicine. This field was populated initially by immigrants from other disciplines, by intrepid, idealistic and determined individuals who were intrigued by the mysteries of sleep. It was a part-time practice rather than a distinct career. Now, sleep medicine is a distinct interdisciplinary specialty that requires the talents of teams of providers including physicians, nurses, technologists and others, caring for patients with the whole continuum of sleep and circadian rhythm disorders.

The current environment is challenging; healthcare is facing the uncertainty of troubled waters. I have been fortunate to work with many of the Academy leaders who have succeeded in addressing current needs while planning for the future. Our members can be assured that the Academy is working diligently to ensure that the field reaches safely to the other shore. Yes, I see the role of the Academy through the immortal words of none other than Simon and Garfunkel: “like a bridge over troubled water”.

The AASM began the discussion about the future in 2008, with two Future of Sleep Medicine working groups and several initiatives addressing the role of Out-Of-Center Sleep Testing, and evaluation of new care models including an integrated sleep management delivery model. The Affordable Care Act has identified challenges and new opportunities for sleep medicine. We are no longer a specialty about a single disease, test, device or medication.

We provide care transcending organ based specialties, caring for one third of human life, a critical third that has direct impact on every aspect of life. The challenge before us is to develop care models that meet three aims: optimal patient experience, including quality and satisfaction; improving the health of the population; and decreasing the cost of care. Clearly, my role as President is to continue the march that the exceptional AASM leaders who preceded me already have begun.

Another important aspect of my job is to ask where the “bridge over troubled water” will take us. Most certainly it will continue to take us toward a greater emphasis on outcome, integrated care and chronic disease management. Even as health care reform continues to shift the sand beneath our feet, I am confident that we are on solid ground. A growing emphasis on high-quality, cost-effective care will favor accredited sleep centers and board certified sleep medicine physicians. We plan to emphasize the value of board certification and Academy accreditation through our public relations initiative, our outreach to private payers, and our support of key legislators through the AASM Political Action Committee. I’m particularly excited about the forthcoming work of our expert Quality Metrics Task Force, which comprises some of the most prominent thought leaders in our field. We also

will continue to explore the potential role that telemedicine will play in the future of sleep medicine.

Educating future physicians about sleep medicine is essential to the vitality of the field. We will develop novel ways to provide online resources to medical students and trainees in all stages of their career as elective education and to promote sleep as a specialty to future physicians.

Another aspect to solidifying the future of sleep medicine is to strengthen the pipeline of leaders within our organization. Therefore, one of my goals is to establish a Leadership Academy to equip the colleagues who will be leading the sleep medicine field in the years ahead. All of these points of emphasis will be delineated in a new Strategic Plan, which is nearing completion after a long period of hard work by the Board of Directors.

As I start my term as president, I want to express my gratitude to all of those who supported me in this journey. I am grateful to Wayne State University School of Medicine, the Detroit medical Center and the John D Dingell VAMC, with special thanks to my colleagues in the Division of Pulmonary Critical Care and Sleep Medicine. I am grateful to Sam and all the members of the Board of Directors for their support and dedication to the field. The staff members of the AASM deserve special credit; I owe them a debt of gratitude for their professionalism, hard work and commitment.

On the personal side, I am grateful to my parents for their unconditional love; my daughters Anisa and Amira, who give my life meaning; and most importantly, I am grateful to my wife Mary Lynn for her unwavering support. She may have been crazy when she agreed to marry me, but since then she has been the source of strength in my life. I wouldn't be standing here in front of you without her support.

Yes, there is troubled water before us today. But we can meet the challenge TOGETHER, with the Academy as our bridge. I believe in our mission and our membership, and I am confident that the brightest days for our field are ahead of us.