9 January 2020

Dear Academy Fellows:

Looking back at 2019, there were several notable accomplishments by the Academy in the past year. The transition to a business calendar that pivots on the Annual Scientific Meeting date, rather than January 1st, is now complete and synchronized with the AACC calendar. At the ASM in Chicago this coming July, Dr. Georgy Abel will assume the presidency of the Academy, and the new 2020-21 officers and council members will be announced.

In 2019, the Academy completed their first Guidance Document, on the topic of biotin interference in laboratory tests. The document was written by Dr. Patrick Kyle, who chaired the committee, and co-authors Drs. Danni Li, Angela Ferguson, Mark Cervinski, and Kara Lynch. A session based on their findings was presented at the 2019 ASM in Anaheim, and the document has been published in the Journal of Applied Laboratory Medicine. A Guidance Document on management of point of care testing was recently completed by Dr. Jim Nichols and his committee consisting of Drs. David Alter, Yu Chen, T. Scott Isbell, Ellis Jacobs, and Norman Moore. The findings have been accepted for presentation at the July 2020 ASM in Chicago. Also accepted for presentation at the Chicago ASM are two additional Guidance Documents: one assesses the use of procalcitonin to guide antibiotic therapy, and is chaired by Dr. Alison Woodworth; the other evaluates current markers of acute kidney injury, and is chaired by Dr. Joe El-Khoury. I encourage you to attend these presentations at the 2020 ASM to support this important Academy program.

The Laboratory Test Utilization Resource now includes 13 completed items, and 12 more LTURs are in various stages of development. The LTUR recommending discontinuation of CK-MB in favor of troponin was elevated to “high impact” status, and is being disseminated through hospital administrative organizations. Our plan is to include LTURs as professional resources appended to the corresponding entries in Lab Tests Online. To help expedite the development, review, and deployment of LTURs, a joint task force including representatives from the Council and the Clinical Practice Core Committee have been appointed to oversee the program. This task force is led by Dr. Yusheng Zhu.

An exciting new initiative grew out of Council discussions of physicians’ lack of knowledge about laboratory medicine. This issue is not new, and it has been the focus of innovative efforts such as diagnostic management teams,
first created by Dr. Mike Lapasota, to involve clinical laboratorians and pathologists in the utilization and interpretation of laboratory tests. The Council considered a complementary approach, which is to provide physicians-in-training with a better understanding of the use and limitations of laboratory studies. Academy Past-President Dr. William Winter has agreed to lead an effort to develop a laboratory medicine curriculum for medical students that includes essential knowledge for proper utilization of clinical laboratory resources. Topics to be covered include the differences between various blood collection tube types, effects of hemolysis, sources of error in laboratory results, predictive value as it relates to sensitivity and specificity, and other concepts that are second nature to clinical laboratory professionals, but are foreign to the vast majority of practicing clinicians. Once a basic laboratory medicine curriculum is developed, the plan is to disseminate it among leaders in medical education, with the hope that it will prompt greater emphasis on laboratory medicine in their core curricula.

Finally, let me express my personal gratitude for the efforts of the Academy Council this past year. Their dedication has made the success of these programs and new initiatives possible. I encourage all fellows to seek ways to get involved with the Academy programs, as authors, as reviewers, as committee members, or simply by providing your feedback and recommendations that will help us plan for the future. Our very capable AACC Staff Liaison, Stefanie Kleinman, will be able to help you find ways to contribute. She can be reached at skleinman@aacc.org or academy@aacc.org.

Sincerely,

Roger L. Bertholf, PhD, DABCC, FAACC
AACC Academy President