President's Message

It is amazing to realize how fast time flies! Next month AsMA is convening its annual scientific meeting in Montreal, Canada. Based on the number and quality of abstracts submitted, this year's scientific program is expected to be even more successful than last year's.

Reflecting over the events that have taken place since our last meeting in May of 2001, it is clear that the past year has been full of surprises, both good and bad. The entire world was shocked by the events of September 11, and all of us have been personally affected, in one way or another, by the everlasting consequences of the worst terrorist attacks in history. The world has not been the same since September 11, and those of us involved with aerospace activities are particularly aware of the fact that safety and security are current topics of significant public interest and concern.

In the space arena, NASA sent more than 6,000 American flags into space aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavor to honor those killed and seriously injured during the terrorist attacks. We have witnessed and applauded the Space Shuttle fleet celebrated its 25th anniversary after having carried more than 3 million pounds of cargo and more than 600 occupants into space. At the same time, we have heard the news about the significant cost overruns (billions of dollars) that will negatively impact ISS operations and capabilities in the foreseeable future. Having an orbiting facility able to conduct unique scientific research (basic and applied) and to learn more about living and working in space requires a fully manned ISS. However, due to the current financial constraints, this may not be possible for some time. The NASA Advisory Council (NAC) produced a report with recommendations for the management and future development of the ISS, based on the findings of the independent ISS Management and Cost Evaluation Task Force. NASA's new Administrator, Sean O'Keefe, and his senior management team face the challenge of assessing the NAC recommendations to help bring the ISS program back on track.

In other space news, the Hubble Space Telescope measured the atmosphere of a planet located in a distant solar system. The Mars Odyssey entered orbit around Mars following a 6-month, 286-million mile trip from Earth. The Mars Global Surveyor sent back to Earth more than 100,000 images of the Martian surface. NASA selected the Dawn Mission to explore the two largest asteroids in our solar system (Vesta and Ceres), and the Kepler Telescope measured the atmosphere of a planet located in a distant solar system. The viability and success of his ambitious proposal also depends on the availability of a reliable manned commercial space vehicle.

The SMF has been busy during the last year. SMB members participated in an AsMA task force that developed and published the "Medical Guidelines for Commercial Space Tourism," originally drafted in February of 2000. This revised draft has been submitted to the Federal Air Surgeon and the FAA Office of Commercial Space Transportation for final review.

The SMB policy committee (chaired by Dr. Phil Scarpa) drafted a proposed resolution on "Uniformity in Development of Medical Standards for Commercial Spaceflight" and submitted it to the AsMA Resolutions Committee. The SMB is endorsing a double panel at the upcoming 73rd Annual Scientific Meeting in Montreal. SMB members and others interested in Space Medicine are encouraged to attend. More details can be found on the March SMB page of this journal.

I invite you to attend our Annual SMB Business Meeting and Luncheon on Thursday, May 9, at noon, Gallery Room, the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Jeff Davis, NASA Associate Administrator for Crew Health and Safety. Dr. Davis will speak about "Space Life Sciences: Current Status and Future Directions."

We will also announce the recipients of the 2002 Hubertus Strughold Award and the Young Investigator Award. I want to thank Dr. Smith Johnston, chair of the Strughold Award committee, and Dr. Jeffrey Myers, chair of the Young Investigator Award committee, for leading the efforts of these committees to identify worthy candidates and select the recipients of these prestigious awards.

I want to acknowledge the great work done by Dr. Chiharu Sekiguchi, SMB Vice-President and Chair of the Nominating Committee, who put together an outstanding ballot of candidates. I wish to thank Dr. Denise Baisden for her willingness to assume the functions of SMB Historian and to recognize Dr. Wycliffe Hobson for his many years of dedicated service in that office.

I want to thank all Officers, Members-At-Large, Committee Chairs, and Committee Members for their dedication in support of the SMB. Dr. Phil Scarpa, SMB Past-President, deserves a special thank for his invaluable guidance and sound advice during my tenure as SMB President.

Melchor J. Antuñano, M.D., M.S.
2001-02 President