

## The American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology



*Nita Seibel, MD*

*By Nita Seibel, MD*

The American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology (ASPHO) is a multidisciplinary organization dedicated to promoting optimal care in children and adolescents with blood disorders and cancer. This is accomplished through advancing research, education, treatment, and professional practice. ASPHO was founded in 1981 and has shown a steady increase in its membership to now

having more than 1,300 members.

ASPHO was the result of the common vision and foresight of a group of physicians practicing during the late 1970s. In 1994, the leadership committed itself to an agenda that would put ASPHO in a position to promote the interest of pediatric hematology/oncology at a national level. The publication committee assumed control of the ASPHO newsletter, and relationships with other national groups, such as ASCO, were established. These moves made it possible for the society to address the more complex issues of patients' access to care, reimbursement, and funding for research and training. It was felt that the adoption of these items represented the maturing of the society.

ASPHO and ASCO are two of the original members of the Alliance for Childhood Cancer (ACC). ASPHO has been a strong supporter of the ACC since its inception, as a result of the National Summit Meetings on Childhood Cancer in 1999 and 2000 sponsored by the American Cancer Society. ACC represents more than 20 national patient advocacy groups and professional medical scientific organizations. Through the support of ASCO, the ACC has been able to bring together patient advocates, many of whom are either cancer survivors themselves or are parents of children with cancer, with professionals and others representing the multidisciplinary spectrum of cancer care for children.

ASPHO is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of the president, vice president/president-elect, secretary/treasurer, past president, and six representatives elected from the membership. The goals of ASPHO are implemented through members' involvement in the standing committees, which include membership, publication, a continuing education and certification program, finance, and development. The following priorities for the upcoming year have been set by the current president William G. Woods, MD, and the board:

- Establishing a career development task force to facilitate the career development of young investigators, minorities, fellows, and members from both large and small institutions
- Developing tools to assist members with certification and recertification
- Holding a summit of "stakeholders" to increase translational and clinical research in sickle cell disease
- Developing a blueprint to advance the annual meeting to the "next level" scientifically and educationally

ASPHO provides a forum for the exchange of ideas on issues of special interest and concern to pediatric hematologist/oncologists, and facilitates communication among members. It is the only professional organization dedicated solely to the professional development and interests of subspecialists in pediatric hematology/oncology. ASPHO represents pediatric hematologist-oncologists through active liaisons with numerous professional societies such as ASCO and alliances such as the ACC.

Both ASPHO's annual meeting held in the spring of each year, in conjunction with the Pediatric Academic Societies and its journal, *Pediatric Blood and Cancer*, provide a forum for presenting research to colleagues and peers. ASPHO supports the development and training of young investigators, which is a major emphasis. This is accomplished through the annual awards recognizing the research presented at the annual meeting by a fellow or junior faculty member. ASPHO cultivates involvement of the fellows by supporting their membership while in training. Training program directors meet at the annual meeting to discuss common issues related to Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Training Programs. As a result of their many discussions, the match was initiated and implemented for residents and Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Training Programs.

The membership of ASPHO recognizes its members who have provided outstanding service and scientific contributions by awarding its Distinguished Career Award. The annual Frank A. Oski Lectureship is designated to remember Dr Oski, to assure that the younger generation of pediatric hematology/oncology specialists is aware of his many contributions, and to honor each year an outstanding clinical or laboratory investigator in pediatric hematology/oncology whose cutting edge research is of the caliber of the investigations made by Oski.

*Nita Seibel, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, George Washington University School of Medicine and Public Health, Attending Physician, Director of Outreach, Department of Hematology/Oncology, Children's National Medical Center, Washington, DC.*