



Perspective

The American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology: a 70-year legacy of accomplishments (1942–2012), part 2: events and achievements (1992–2012)

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In 2012, the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (ACAAI) celebrated its 70th anniversary. As ACAAI historian, I was asked by the Board of Regents to continue writing the history of the College, updating events that have occurred since the first 50-year history of our organization from 1942–1992 was documented as part of my presidential address at the 50th annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois, in November 1992 and that was subsequently published in the *Annals*.¹ This publication continues our ACAAI history in the making and includes a 20-year follow-up of College events and achievements from 1992 to 2012.

50-Year Highlights of the History of the College (1942–1992)

The American College of Allergists was officially incorporated as a legal entity on November 23, 1942, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The events that led to its establishment have a poetic and poignant history. In 1942, the destiny of the practice of allergy in the United States was being shaped by a number of powerful professional forces and prominent national figures. The 2 major professional allergy organizations prevalent at that time were the Western Society for the Study of Asthma, Hayfever and Allergic Diseases, commonly referred to as the Western Society, which was founded in 1923, and the Society for the Study of Asthma and Allied Disorders, commonly referred to as the Eastern Society, which was founded in 1924. Amalgamation of these 2 national allergy societies led to the formation of what was to become the American Academy of Allergy on December 4, 1943, approximately 1 year after the founding of the College.

One of the most prominent national figures in the field of allergy during this period was Robert A. Cooke, MD, of New York City, who was not only making significant scientific contributions to the study of allergic diseases and establishing a premier program for the training of allergists but also, with others, shaping the policies for the certification of allergists in the United States. Cooke held the view that certification of physicians should

occur only as a subspecialty of internal medicine under the auspices of the new Board of Allergy, a subspecialty of the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM). A grandfather mechanism had been set in place, which allowed internists to be certified by the ABIM if they held a faculty position at a Class A medical school and if they had reached 40 years of age by July 1, 1937.

At this point, Frederick W. Wittich, MD, entered into the history of the College. Dr Wittich was a 57-year-old internist-allergist practicing in Minneapolis who held a clinical faculty position at the University of Minnesota and who met all the Cooke qualification criteria for certification. Owing to a technicality amounting to a 1-day late submission of a membership application, however, Dr Wittich set out on a divergent and unanticipated course and founded the American College of Allergists.

Dr Wittich was no ordinary man, and although he was responsible for the founding of the College, he never became its president but was the driving force for many of the policies and projects of the infant organization. Among his many contributions, he established the *Annals of Allergy* as the official publication of the College and used it as a vehicle for communication of events pertinent to allergists, as a forum for exchange of ideas, and for the implementation of the goals of the College. The first president of the College was Bernard J. Efron, MD (1942–1943), and although no annual meeting was held during the first year (1942) because the country was at war, business was conducted by the Board of Regents.

The first issue of the *Annals of Allergy* contained a lead editorial written by Wittich entitled "Why A College?"² The following overall goals of the College set forth in the original Charter were enumerated:

- The establishment of an organization of qualified medical men and scientists of good standing who shall meet from time to time for the purpose of promoting and advancing the study, research and clinical knowledge of allergy as it applies to the various specialties in medicine
- To maintain and advance the highest possible standards among those engaged in the practice of allergy

Disclosures: Dr Bellanti is the past-president (1991–1992) and historian of the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology. Author has nothing to disclose.

- To perpetuate the best traditions of medicine and medical ethics; to establish standards for the qualification, and procedure for the certification of men engaged in the specialty of allergy
- To maintain the dignity and efficiency of this specialty and its relation to public welfare
- To promote friendly intercourse among those engaged in the practice of allergy

To attain these goals, a set of specific objectives was also delineated in subsequent years that included:

- The establishment of a Foundation through funds donated by wealthy persons or grateful victims of the disease who are desirous of furthering our knowledge and scope of allergy
- The promotion of international educational relationships with other countries through the establishment of chapters
- The creation of a mechanism for certification of allergists by the College

In subsequent years these 3 objectives defined by our founding fathers were successfully pursued and accomplished by future leaders of the College, leading to the following:

- Establishment of the Foundation of the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology in 1990 as a not-for-profit, charitable 501(c)3 organization to initiate, promote and fund clinical research and educational programs related to allergy, asthma & immunology
- Continued support of speakers through our Visiting Ambassador Program
- Establishment of the new Conjoint Board of the ABIM and the American Board of Pediatrics in 1971

Thus, the purpose, motivation, and genesis for the formation of the College derived from a group of dedicated visionaries who believed that there was a need for a liberal, democratic organization ecumenical in its composition and receptive to its charge to build and develop an organization that could meet the needs of the practicing allergist and ultimately the patients whom we

serve—a charge that has been maintained with fidelity to the present day!

A more detailed description of the first 50-year history of the College (1942-1992) can be found in my article published in the *Annals* in 1993.¹ The 49th Annual Meeting of the College, which was held in New York City in 1991, under the presidency of Edward J. O'Connell, MD, had as its programmatic theme *Quo Vadis?* (Where Are We Going?). This was an appropriate theme because the leadership was confronted with the issue of merger with the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI). With the unanimous support of the membership, the College opted against a merger, thus ensuring the vitality of the organization to perform its mission as a single entity and to fulfill the mandate of its founding fathers. At the annual meeting the first fund-raising event, which I organized, was held. The event raised funds for the support of the newly established inner-city asthma initiative and the college scholars program. These fund-raising events have continued to the present and have supported the ACAAI Foundation programs.

The History of the College (1992-2012)—the Next 20 Years

Table 1 lists the presidents, years of term, meeting sites, and programmatic themes of the annual meetings of the College for the past 20 years.



Figure 1. Joseph A. Bellanti, MD

During my presidency (1991-1992) (Fig 1), there was continued membership recruitment, with emphasis on younger members and support of fellows-in-training (FITs) and younger allergists entering practice. Development of a strong research and education fund was initiated, which continued the support of the inner-city asthma initiative and college scholars program. I also emphasized the broadening of the scope of the allergist to include other aspects of clinical immunology and championed the continuation of the fund-raising event for support of other College initiatives.

Table 1
Presidents, Years of Term, Meeting Sites, and Programmatic Themes of Annual Meetings of the College (1992-2012)

| President | Year of presidency | Meeting site | Program theme |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---|
| Joseph A. Bellanti, MD | 1991-1992 | Chicago, IL | <i>Carpe Diem!</i> |
| John C. Selner, MD [†] | 1992-1993 | Atlanta, GA | Health Care Reform! |
| Robert T. Scanlon, MD [†] | 1993-1994 | San Francisco, CA | Prescription for Change! |
| Diane E. Schuller, MD | 1994-1995 | Dallas, TX | Expanding Horizons! |
| Ira Finegold, MD | 1995-1996 | Boston, MA | Meet the Challenge! |
| Betty B. Wray, MD | 1996-1997 | San Diego, CA | Pathways to the Future! |
| Jean A. Chapman, MD [†] | 1997-1998 | Philadelphia, PA | Gateway to the 21st Century! |
| Robert M. Miles, MD | 1998-1999 | Chicago, IL | Follow the Leader Into the New Millennium! |
| Don Q. Mitchell, MD | 1999-2000 | Seattle, WA | Distilling the Past & Envisioning the Future! |
| Emil J. Bardana, MD | 2000-2001 | Orlando, FL | Scientific News You Can Use! |
| Bob Q. Lanier, MD | 2001-2002 | San Antonio, TX | First the Patient! |
| William E. Berger, MD | 2002-2003 | New Orleans, LA | Defining the Allergy/Immunologist: The Multidisciplinary Approach to Care |
| Michael S. Blaiss, MD | 2003-2004 | Boston, MA | Lighting Our Path to the Future! |
| Myron J. Zitt, MD | 2004-2005 | Anaheim, CA | <i>Vade Mecum!</i> |
| William K. Dolen, MD | 2005-2006 | Philadelphia, PA | We Have Only Just Begun |
| Daniel Ein, MD | 2006-2007 | Dallas, TX | Across the Quality Chasm |
| Jay M. Portnoy, MD | 2007-2008 | Seattle, WA | Embracing the Challenges of Change |
| Richard G. Gower, MD | 2008-2009 | Miami Beach, FL | Expanding the Spectrum |
| Sami L. Bahna, MD, DrPH | 2009-2010 | Phoenix, AZ | eACAAI: Excellence in Clinical Education, Communication and Patient Care |
| Dana V. Wallace, MD | 2010-2011 | Boston, MA | Proud of Our Past – Preparing for Our Future |
| Stanley M. Fineman, MD | 2011-2012 | Anaheim, CA | Over the Horizon: Expanding Expertise |

[†]Deceased.

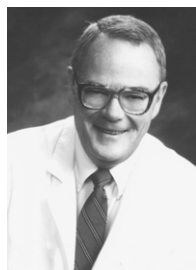


Figure 2. John C. Selner, MD

The presidency of John C. Selner, MD (1992–1993) (Fig 2), witnessed the continued growth of the College. He advocated the ongoing support of the inner-city asthma initiative and college scholars programs and positioned the College financially for better support of its research and education programs. During his presidency, the College launched its first television satellite program.



Figure 3. Robert T. Scanlon, MD

Robert T. Scanlon, MD (1993–1994) (Fig 3), recognized the importance of marketing and educating the public on the importance of an allergist as the best trained specialist for the management and treatment of allergic diseases. He initiated early seminal marketing programs and launched the first marketing film, *A Second Wind*, highlighting the important role of the allergist in management of asthma.



Figure 4. Diane E. Schuller, MD

Diane E. Schuller, MD (1994–1995) (Fig 4), was the first female president of the College. During her presidency, the 'A' for asthma was added to ACAAI to emphasize the role of the allergist in treatment of asthma. She and the Board of Regents worked diligently with the American Medical Association and other specialty organizations to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of allergy-immunology care by the allergist. She also focused on education of the primary care physician and continued the development of practice parameters.



Figure 5. Ira Finegold, MD

Ira Finegold, MD (1995–1996) (Fig 5), addressed 2 significant challenges to the field of allergy. The first was the decreased teaching and appreciation of immunotherapy as a bona fide therapeutic option, and the second addressed the transition from metered-dose inhalers that contain chlorofluorocarbons to nonozone, chlorofluorocarbon-free types that do not deplete ozone levels. An immunotherapy campaign was initiated to reestablish the importance of this treatment, and through

many collaborative efforts the non chlorofluorocarbon transition was accomplished.



Figure 6. Betty B. Wray, MD

During the presidency of Betty B. Wray, MD (1996–1997) (Fig 6), the College continued to promote travel grants for FITs to attend meetings and to create awards for best abstracts and grants to young faculty for research. The ACAAI produced the publication *Expert Care and Immunotherapy for Asthma: A Review of Published Studies With Emphasis on Patient Outcome and Cost* in November 1996 and made it widely available to the membership for use with insurance and managed care



Figure 7. Jean A. Chapman, MD

- Expanded College membership
- Maintained relationships with other organizations

Through his efforts, the College continued as a viable entity dedicated to the practicing allergist.



Figure 8. Robert M. Miles, MD

During the presidency of Robert M. Miles, MD (1998–1999) (Fig 8), the College initiated a model project to screen school children for asthma using a validated questionnaire. Using the validated questionnaire developed from this prototype, pilot projects were introduced in several Chicago schools. During this period, the college continued promotion of membership recruitment and support of fellows-in-training.



Figure 9. Don Q. Mitchell, MD

The fiscal stability of the College was ensured during the presidency of Don Q. Mitchell, MD (1999–2000) (Fig 9). This presidential year witnessed the establishment of the ACAAI Investment Oversight Committee for College Investments and for fiscal policy and actions and the strengthening of travel grants for FITs and invitations to medical/pediatric residents to attend the ACAAI meetings. It also initiated the establishment of the 2000–2001 named lectureships and created the Joint Task Force on Practice Parameters.

The first biannual immunotherapy conference was held in New York City, Medem launched the "Your Practice Online" website, and the Scholars Return and Young Faculty Support grant program was strengthened.



Figure 10. Emil J. Bardana, MD

During the presidency of Emil J. Bardana, MD (2000–2001) (Fig 10), the College focused on a variety of global initiatives with the goal of using its excellent continuing medical education (CME) resources, including ACAAI lecturers, to expand its international educational efforts, thus fulfilling the international of the founding fathers. He also developed AllergyWatch and expanded its electronic access to the membership. The fiscal status of the College was strengthened by

initiation of programs that enriched the Foundation that provided continued funding support for allergy/immunology training programs and the scholars program.



Figure 11. Bob Q. Lanier, MD

The 60th year anniversary of the College in 2002 was celebrated during the presidency of Bob Q. Lanier, MD (2001–2002) (Fig 11), who was responsible for the creation of several innovative electronic communication techniques, including the ACAAI e-news feature. He promoted several international educational programs and championed World Allergy Association programs. Dr Lanier was the creator of the “Gold Headed Cane” award, which recognizes an allergist who symbolizes the pursuit of the highest standards of scientific excellence and integrity and who is a role model for younger physicians.



Figure 12. William E. Berger, MD

During the presidency of William E. Berger, MD (2002–2003) (Fig 12), the ACAAI responded to over-the-counter switches of prescribed medications by education of professional and lay groups through media programs. Also accomplished during this year was the publication of the Immunotherapy Practice Parameters and the second edition of *Asthma Management and the Role of the Allergist*, which clearly documented that patients under the care of an allergist had fewer hospitalizations, fewer sick care office visits, decreased

absenteeism from work or school, and an improved quality of life. The ACAAI Board of Regents held their first joint board meeting with the AAAAI Board of Directors in Chicago, Illinois.



Figure 13. Michael S. Blaiss, MD

During the presidency of Michael S. Blaiss, MD (2003–2004) (Fig 13), continued growth of the College occurred. The highlights of this year included hosting the interim board meetings in Washington, DC, to allow for legislative advocacy meetings with the US Congress for continued support of programs that benefited patients with allergies and asthma. Another major initiative during this year conceived by Dr Blaiss was the ACORN Project, which funded up to 5

allergy fellows per year to cover stipends for training. This successful endeavor led to the training of many board-certified allergists practicing throughout the United States without which many allergy training programs would have lost training positions or possibly their entire programs.

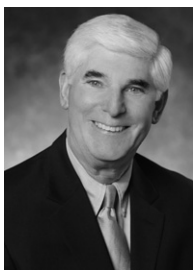


Figure 14. Myron J. Zitt, MD

The 63rd Annual Meeting of the College, which was held in Anaheim, California, in 2005, under the presidency of Myron J. Zitt, MD (2004–2005) (Fig 14), had as its programmatic theme *Vade Mecum!*—a reference to the College motto, “Follow the Leader Into the Future!” This was an appropriate theme during this time and emphasized the role of the allergist as the best trained specialist for the management and treatment of patients with allergic diseases, which gave rise to Dr Zitt’s mantra

of “Nobody does it better.” Recognizing the importance of preserving and developing the specialty of allergy not only at home but throughout the world, he championed promoting international educational activities and building diplomatic relationships throughout the world and working with lay allergy organizations.



Figure 15. William K. Dolen, MD

During the presidency of William K. Dolen, MD (2005–2006) (Fig 15), promotion of graduate medical education became a priority focus, and a major legislative effort was directed to making the Congress aware of the impending crisis in funding. The ACORN Project continued awarding 5 new first-year 2006–2008 fellowship stipends, bringing the total to \$750,000. The College continued its support of international, regional, state, and local allergy society meetings, conducted a successful long-range planning process, and had a successful joint meeting with the AAAAI.



Figure 16. Daniel Ein, MD

During the presidency of Daniel Ein, MD (2006–2007) (Fig 16), the College initiated the marketing program based on recommendations of a task force committee chaired by Dr Richard Gower that raised the visibility of ACAAI as a major leadership organization, and “Hot Topics in Allergy” was initiated on XM Radio. The College continued its legislative advocacy initiative for increased funding for allergy-immunology training programs and its CME program was recertified with commendation.



Figure 17. Jay M. Portnoy, MD

Under the leadership of Jay M. Portnoy, MD (2007–2008) (Fig 17), the Board of Regents voted to continue the ACORN Project, funding 5 additional fellowship stipends for \$50,000 per year for 2009–2011. An innovative Conferences On-Line Allergy program developed by Dr Portnoy was initiated and has become a first for the College in teleconference education programs. The public awareness campaign “Find an Allergist, Find Relief” was unveiled during the meeting and has continued since 2009. The College

continued its support for the World Allergy Organization and its Emerging Societies Program.



Figure 18. Richard G. Gower, MD

During the presidency of Richard G. Gower, MD (2008–2009) (Fig 18), a new position of executive medical director of the ACAAI was created. Dr Bob Q. Lanier was selected for this important role and assumed his duties on September 1, 2009. The Board of Regents updated the ACAAI strategic plan and adopted 4 main goals and numerous objectives for each area of focus. The “Find an Allergist, Find Relief” campaign was fully launched, with more than 1,100 members joining the “relief team” to help educate the public about allergic diseases and the important role played by specialty trained allergists.



Figure 19. Sami L. Bahna, MD, DrPH

The presidential year of Sami L. Bahna, MD, DrPH (2009–2010) (Fig 19), witnessed the continuation of the ACAAI as a prominent national and international organization dedicated to education, collaboration, and advocacy. The College increased its membership by 5,708, representing 89 countries, increased its collaboration with the AAAAI in addressing practice issues and preparation of joint statements, and continued its support of the EAAACI.

During this presidential year, the ACAAI partnered with National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in developing the *Guidelines on Food Allergy Diagnosis and Management* publication.



Figure 20. Dana V. Wallace, MD

Operational excellence and a balanced budget were the defining measures of the presidential term of Dana V. Wallace, MD (2010–2011) (Fig 20). Under her leadership, the College focused on 3 priorities: the annual meeting, the *Annals*, and CME. During this presidential year, the leadership developed and implemented evaluation instruments and a policy and procedure book for the Board of Regents, the executive medical director, and the executive director, which provided a blueprint and guideline for all ACAAI

operations, including organizational structure, informational services, professional standards, strategic planning, and finances. Another major achievement of this presidential year was the creation of a new and ever-improving ACAAI.org website, representing a key member's go-to place for all allergy-related information and communication.



Figure 21. Stanley M. Fineman, MD

During the presidential year of Stanley M. Fineman, MD (2011–2012) (Fig 21), the College celebrated its 70-year anniversary. The College continued its promotion of the needs of the practicing allergist, maintaining excellence in CME, the changing marketplace, and ultimately the patients whom we serve. The College has also helped provide our members with the tools to manage the changes in health care delivery, both understanding the

new developments in allergy and adapting to changes in practice regulatory requirements and in the marketplace. A new section on the ACAAI website was introduced during this presidential year, which provides a resource for the new federal health regulations. Since its founding, the College has increased to nearly 6,000 members. Through the dedication of its leaders and members, it continues to excel in innovation and excellence.

Other Highlights of the College in the Last 20 Years

During the 1992–2012 period, the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology* has continued to be the premier vehicle of communication of clinical and research contributions under the leadership of Dr Sly, Dr O'Connell, and, at present, Dr Gailen Marshall.

Since its inception in 1954, the Alliance of the ACAAI continues to support and augment the activities of the College and its mission of education and research by encouraging the growth of the specialty of allergy and clinical immunology. The Alliance continues to provide Clemens von Pirquet Awards and travel grants to FITs for their outstanding abstracts in the field of allergy, asthma, and immunology and offers ACAAI KIDS programs, hospitality, and its well-attended international reception at the ACAAI annual meetings.

The College also continues its support and affiliation with several lay organizations, including the Allergy and Asthma Foundation and the Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics and the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network.

The administration, under the direction of Mr Rick Slawny and staff, has continued to provide excellence in the management of College programs.

Conclusion

The legacy of accomplishments of the ACAAI from its past, present, and future directions can be best highlighted by the following themes of 3 previous ACAAI meetings:

Quo Vadis? (Where Are We Going?)

Carpe Diem! (Seize the Day!)

Vade Mecum! (Follow the Leader Into the Future!)

References

- [1] Bellanti JA. Proud of the past: planning for the future. *Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol.* 1993;70:445–461.
- [2] Wittich FW. Why a college [editorial]? *Ann Allergy.* 1943;1:62–63.