

American
Academy
of Clinical
Toxicology,
Inc.



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President's Corner: Behind the Scenes of the NACCT Meeting

Donna Seger, MD

It is with pleasure (and some trepidation) that I look forward to the next two years. Although the time will go quickly, there is a great deal to do. During the last two years as President-Elect, I perceived that there were many questions and misconceptions regarding the North



Dr. Seger

American Congress of Clinical Toxicology (NACCT). I would like to use this first communication to provide an overview of how the Annual Meeting comes to be. The following are the considerations that must be addressed regarding location: cost, symposia, social events etc. I have asked individuals that have (and do) play a key role in the development of the meeting to comment.

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee plans all aspects of the Annual Meeting. This ranges from the mundane aspects like space planning for committee meetings and food and beverage selection, to the core purpose of the meeting—the educational content. This committee is composed of the AACT Executive committee and other members appointed by the President. The Planning Committee for NACCT 2003 is:

Jeffrey Brent, *Chair*

Members

Gregory Gaar
Ed Krenzelok
Michael McGuigan
Jim Mowry
Donna Seger
Milton Tenenbein

Location

The choice of location and hotel is challenging because so many needs must be met. Jeffrey Brent MD has been in charge of this for the last two years. The following are his comments:

There are many daunting challenges in the determination of locations for the NACCT. We strive for the highest quality meeting space and hotel facilities at the best prices we can negotiate. Accomplishing these goals is difficult because we are a meeting space intensive congress relative to the number of hotel rooms we utilize. We have an unwavering commitment to the membership of the participating organizations to keep registration prices very low. In order to do so, we have evolved an unwritten policy over the years that we try not to pay for meeting space. This requires that we negotiate with hotels that have adequate meeting facilities for our group and who will provide them to us as at no additional cost as part of the contract. The alternative, which many professional meetings utilize, is to rent space at convention centers. To do so, however, would probably double the registration costs for the meeting. Up to now, we have been very successful in meeting the above goals and believe that we should be able to continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

There are two location-related considerations that further factor into our decision making process—the actual city that we choose (if there are several high quality choices), and whether to use an inner city or a resort location. The choice of cities is based on a desire to utilize both the west and east parts of the United States or Canada with relatively equal frequency. The second derives from our surveys of meeting attendees. We did our latest survey at the Palm Springs meeting. The locations that scored the highest were: San Francisco,

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Upcoming Meetings

European Association of
Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists

XXII International Congress

May 20-23, 2003
Rome, Italy

Co-Sponsored by the American Academy of Clinical
Toxicology

For more information, please visit www.eapcct.org.

*Provisional and final programs
will be placed on the web site.*

Behind the Scenes of the NACCT Meeting

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Vancouver, San Diego, Hawaii, and Washington, D.C. Look forward to meetings in some of these locations in the years to come.

The city versus resort issue has also been the subject of several surveys of NACCT attendees. Ten years ago, while at an inner city location, a questionnaire showed an approximately 50:50 split between these two options and since then we have tried to go to these two types of venues about half the time each. A similar survey at Palm Springs demonstrated that a resort location gave cities the edge by approximately 4:1. Although there may have been a component of “the grass is always greener”, we believe that this indicates that meeting attendees would like to see a shift towards more “downtown” locations and will try to use these kinds of sites approximately two-thirds of the time in the future. For the next two years, NACCT will be at in-town locations in Chicago and Seattle. In 2005, NACCT will be at a brand-new (still under construction) combined JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton facility in Orlando. Chicago, Seattle, and Orlando were not on our most recent surveys because we knew from past polls that these were locations that were requested frequently by meeting participants. JB

Meeting Structure

Structure of the meeting has evolved over the past years. Symposia that were an “experiment” that received great evaluations have become annual events. The Planning Committee has developed the following guidelines to ensure that all organizations are represented fairly and the educational content meets the continuing education requirements:

■ Meeting Schedule

The schedule for each day is on a spreadsheet-like grid. The grid moves forward one day each year. Main events that are on the first day of the meeting this year will be on the last day of the meeting next year. Therefore, all of the organizational symposia will rotate through the schedule and no symposium will be the last day on a consistent basis.

■ Pre-Meeting Symposia

The ACMT and AACT present symposia on the two days prior to the official start of the NACCT. Both of these symposia have become very popular and attendance increases each year. Although the meeting does not officially start until after these symposia, they have gained a place as part of the meeting. The order in which these symposia are presented alternates each year. In Palm Springs, ACMT presented their symposium on “Analeptics and Neuroleptics” two days before the meeting and AACT presented their symposium on “Medication-Induced Syndromes.” the day before the meeting. At the Chicago 2003 meeting, this order will be reversed.

■ Symposia

Chairs of the respective symposia either “volunteer” or are asked to take the job. The topic for the AACT symposia is chosen by the Planning Committee and is based, in large part, on feedback from the attendees. ABAT, CAPCC, and EAPCCT each choose the topic for their respective symposium. The

topics for all symposia are reviewed by the Planning Committee to ensure that topics are not duplicated.

Continuing Education Credits

This is one of the most important aspects of the meeting. Jim Mowry Pharm D. has been the Chair of the Education Committee since 1994. It is his hard work that has allowed you to collect all those CE credits. Jim’s comments follow:

The continuing education process for each NACCT meeting starts with the previous Congress. The results of the evaluation forms that you, the participants turn in, are summarized and provided to the symposia organizers, speakers, and participating organizations, along with our Guidelines for Symposia Organizers, 8 to 10 months before the next congress. Six to eight months prior to the Congress, the Academy, or the co-sponsor organizing the symposia, conducts a needs assessment of their audience, selects a topic, and develops learner objectives in conjunction with the Education Committee. Detailed information about the proposed education session is submitted to the Education Committee 5 to 6 months prior to the Congress, reviewed for assignment of credit hours and distributed to the Education Committee for comment and approval. Once revised and approved by the Education Committee, the educational activity is approved by the AACT Board of Trustees. In some cases, the Board of Trustees approves symposium topics in principle for Academy sponsored programs which are then referred to the Education Committee to work with the organizers on developing the actual programming. In addition, 5 to 6 months prior to the Congress, the symposia organizer chooses speakers and the Education Committee confirms them with an agreement letter and speaker’s packet spelling out the speaker’s responsibilities and submission deadlines. All speakers are required to submit their CV, a signed Faculty Confirmation Letter, and a variety of information forms including a signed Financial Disclosure Statement. Syllabus materials are due approximately 2 months prior to the Congress. The items requested from the speakers are submitted to the NACCT meeting planner and reviewed and monitored periodically by the Education Committee. The Education Committee then works with the AACT Executive Council, AACT office, and the NACCT meeting planner to insure that the program materials comply with medical and pharmacy CE requirements. In addition, application is made at this time to the Emergency Nurses Association for nursing and American College of Emergency Medicine CE credit. After the Congress has concluded, the Education Committee issues the certificates of credit, resolves any issues with granting CE credit to individuals, and starts the cycle once again by summarizing the evaluation forms. JM

Costs

As secretary/treasurer, Gregory Gaar MD has been most involved with the costs of the meeting. His comments follow:

AACT must guarantee to pay for a block of rooms to ensure a guaranteed lower room rate and to guarantee meeting space. Therefore, if we book more rooms than are actually rented, AACT must pay for them. A key point: If you overbook rooms

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early in the process, many who later try to make reservations must be put on a waiting list. Then, when your overbook is released, we risk losing our minimum. (Please don't overbook and cancel at the last minute!).

The Presidents' reception usually costs \$25,000-\$35,000. The costs of the venue, food and beverage, and transportations add up quickly. Traditionally, the Presidents' Receptions has been partially supported by generous contributions from McNeil. The choice of the reception location is determined by availability at the hotel and venues in other places in the city.

The Keynote Breakfast began five years ago. From 1998 to 2001, it was supported by a grant from Whitehall-Robins Healthcare. In 2002, it was generously supported by a grant from Protherics.

The Planning Committee, in conjunction with the sponsoring societies, made the decision several years ago that the primary focus of the meeting was the educational opportunities offered. Although the social events are great fun, cost is a consideration in choosing these venues.

Many of you have asked why we don't have more luncheons and food at breaks. Expense is the primary reason. In Palm Springs, we spent over \$40,000 on continental breakfasts alone; over \$ 50.00 per person from your registration fee. GG

Contemporary Forums

Contemporary Forums (CF) coordinates the logistics of the conference from site research, site selections, airline and transportation discounts, meeting promotion, meeting syllabus, registration process, exhibitor process, and on-site logistics. CF does not choose the hotel, venues, policies for refunds, etc. Leigh De La Torre has ensured the smoothness of the process (and handled all "unexpected occurrences") as our coordinator and on-site administrator.

NACCT 2003

The meeting in Chicago will be a time to celebrate and special activities for the 50th Anniversary are being planned. If you have ideas, please forward them to me or any member of the Planning Committee.

Conclusion

As President of this great organization, I have goals that I hope to fulfill, and will address them in the next issue of *AACTion*. I am always open to new ideas and would be happy to discuss any thoughts you have regarding the meeting or the direction of the Academy. My e-mail address is donna.seger@vanderbilt.edu.

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