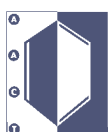


American
Academy
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Editor
Elizabeth Scharman,
PharmD

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President's Corner

G. Randall Bond, MD



I trust you are enjoying the winter. In Cincinnati we have just “dug out” from our biggest snow of the last 10 years.

For AACT, winter is the “time between” i.e., the time between the 2007 NACCT meeting, the 2008 NACCT planning meeting, and our mid-year board meeting. During this season, the AACT is working just as busily, but behind

the scenes. Think of it as housekeeping and maintenance: essential, but not exciting. It includes organizational reviews, accounting, planning, reviewing business operations, and planning with other organizations for later spring and the fall. Consequently I have less specific action items to report.

We are working on NACCT 2008 in Toronto. In addition to NACCT meeting planning and meeting content development, work continues on strategic planning (you should have had the opportunity to log into our member survey). The consultant is performing some direct

interviews as well. The special interest groups continue to work, in one case (Envenomations) working with the Board to draft a letter to the FDA about the impact of the impending loss of coral snake antivenom and how to ease adjustment. We are also working to revitalize (and migrate) our website and increase functionality—including journal access. Ideas are welcome! You may already notice the better journal access through the members only section of the website. We are also working with Informa, Inc. to make the direct access to the Clinical Toxicology website easier and seeking to make it more useful for members (intuitive). Please contact me if you have any comments about any aspect of our operation. We can only address it if we know about it.

Looking ahead, we have the AACT Board of Trustees meeting April 22nd-23rd and the elections. As we consider officer nominations I want to remind you to let me (Randall.bond@cchmc.org) or our secretary treasurer (martin.caravati@hsc.utah.edu) know if there are any candidates you particularly want the nominating committee to consider. We will need to fill the President-Elect, Secretary/Treasurer, and several board spots. We hope to have the election in late Spring.

Remember, I welcome your feedback. It is your Academy.

AACT Member Receives Award



Ruth Lawrence, MD, Medical Director and founder of the Ruth A. Lawrence Poison & Drug Information Center and Professor of Pediatrics and Obstetrics and Gynecology was presented with the 22nd annual Athena Award this past January in Rochester, New York. The award was started in 1982. According to the University of Rochester Newspaper, the

award's purpose is to “celebrate women of achievement in the community, noting their professional excellence and community service, and their active and generous assistance in helping other women develop professional excellence and leadership skills.”

Dr. Lawrence is best known for her work in the field of breastfeeding advocacy. Her other accomplishments are numerous. She was the first woman in Yale's medical residency program, she founded the first neonatal and pediatric intensive care units in Rochester, she established a precursor to the 911 system in Rochester, she created The Women in Science, Dentistry and Medicine Committee, she is on a high school board in addition to the Girl Scout Board for Monroe County, and she is the mother of nine children.

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Patrick: A Patron Saint of Toxicology?



Saint Patrick (Naomh Pádraig) was the founder of Celtic Christianity and is revered as the patron saint of Ireland. In 373 AD, Patrick was born in Roman Britain along the River Clyde in present day Scotland. When he was sixteen, he was captured by Irish raiders and taken as a slave to Ireland, where he was forced to work as a herdsman for six years. He then escaped to the northern coast of Gaul and was reunited with his family in Britain. Like his father (Calpornius) and grandfather (Potitus) before him, he entered the church and became a deacon and bishop. He later returned to Ireland as a missionary and was most influential during the

second half of the fifth century. The Annals of Ulster document that he ministered in Northern Ireland from 433 onwards. His refusal to accept gifts from kings placed him outside the normal ties of kinship and protection. On one occasion, he was beaten, robbed of all he had, and put in chains to await execution. Although the exact date remains controversial, Patrick allegedly died of natural causes in 493 AD in the 120th year of his life, 60 years after he had returned to Ireland to baptize the Irish.

Legend credits Patrick with banishing poisonous snakes from the Emerald Isle, though post-glacial Ireland never actually had indigenous snakes. One suggestion is that snakes referred to the serpent symbolism of the Druids of that time, or may have referred to beliefs such as Pelagianism, symbolized by serpents. Most versions of the folklore tell of Patrick standing upon a hill, using a wooden staff to drive the serpents into the sea, banishing them forever from Ireland. Another version says that the oldest serpent resisted banishment, but that Patrick outwitted him. Patrick made a box and invited the snake to enter. The snake insisted it was too small and the two argued. Finally to prove his point, the snake entered the box to show how tight the fit was. Patrick slammed the lid closed and cast the box into the sea. No historical documents record an actual envenomation or the use of a sacred antidote.

Best known for a more controversial and “evil” role in the Garden of Eden, the snake was actually revered by an early Christian cult – the Ophites. The Ophites evolved in Egypt during the 2nd century AD



and existed for several centuries afterwards. The name was derived from the Greek 'ophis', meaning 'serpent', and relates to the great reverence which the Ophites had toward the serpent. In ancient medicine, serpents symbolized healing. The caduceus depicts a snake entwining around the staff of Asclepius, the Greek God of healing. The snake

was identified by the Ophite Christians with their Christ, an exclusively spiritual force. It was much later in medieval times that pious leaders used the snake to universally symbolize sin and the works of Satan in an attempt to frighten followers back into the church.

Ironically in many religions, including the early Christian church, serpents were connected with renewal or resurrection. This trait was derived from the practice of snakes shedding their old skin and regenerating a new covering. Additionally, eternity was often symbolized by the image of a snake swallowing its own tail, known as Ouroboros.

Legend also credits St. Patrick with teaching the Irish Druids about the concept of the Trinity by showing followers the shamrock, a 3-leaved clover, in order to highlight the Christian belief of 'three divine persons in the one God'.

Currently, St. Patrick's Day is better known for celebration and the consumption of another popular toxin, ethanol, commonly manifested in beer. In the 18th century words of Benjamin Franklin: "Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy." (Of interest, in a 1775 published letter, Franklin made a good case for the rattlesnake as an appropriate symbol the United States representing "the temper and conduct of America.")



Annually, March 17th brings out the emerald green in everyone. If you're a true toxicologist (of any descent or religion), it's just not St. Patrick's Day without a pint of green beer. Simply add two drops of green food coloring to a pint of your favorite brew. Naturally, the green shows through better with a lighter colored pilsner, but any ale will do. Even a jet black stout will get a distinctly green head if you add the drops of color to the glass before pouring. Personally, I enjoy my favorite St. Patrick's lager with a pinch of dazzling green absinthe...

Timothy B. Erickson, MD, FACEP, FAACT, FACMT

*May the Irish hills caress you.
May her lakes and rivers bless you.
May the luck of the Irish enfold you.
May the blessings of Saint Patrick behold you.
-Irish Blessing*

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AACT Administrative Office
777 East Park Drive
PO Box 8820
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8820
(717) 558-7847 (phone)
(717) 558-7841 (fax)
aact@pamedsoc.org
www.clintox.org

Executive Director
Susie Wilson
swilson@pamedsoc.org

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Announcements

Michael G. Holland, MD has been named as the new Chair of the Communications and Technology Committee. As such, Dr. Holland is hard at work modernizing and updating the AACT website (www.clintox.org) and he hopes to have a brilliant new website finalized and launched by late Sum-

mer, 2008. Mike is anxious to hear from any and all members who may have suggestions for the new and improved web presence he is working hard to develop. Feel free to contact Mike at mholland@glensfallshosp.org.

In 2007, the leadership of the Occupational/Environmental SIG transitioned from Michael Greenberg to John Curtis. John is Assistant Program Director for the Medical Toxicology Training Program at the Drexel College of Medicine. The SIG hosted its first poster presentation session ever at the 2007 meeting in New Orleans and saw enormous interest. The session was a great success with over sixty people in attendance. Spirited discussion of the posters presented by Drs. J. Schier, T. Thompson, AF Pizon, and CM Murphy made the session a big success.



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