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The American Academy of Physician Assistants in Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology



A Letter From Our President

Written by Amanda Hofmann MPAS PA-C
AAPA-AAI Current President

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

A Letter From our President 1

A Letter From our President Cont. 2

The Real Bully in the School Yard 3

Perspective: PAs in Research 3

Board Applications 3

Mission Statement 3

Contact Us 4

Hello from Pittsburgh! I hope the summer has been good to all of you, and full of fun, sun, and maybe even expanding your knowledge at our annual meeting this past July in New Orleans. It was another successful conference, and I enjoyed seeing many returning colleagues, and meeting some of you for the first time. I want to thank each of you for your contribution to the AAPA-AAI, whether by membership, service on the board of directors, or attendance in New Orleans. You have helped our organization achieve another prosperous year. We as an organization are advancing the PA profession, and increasing safe and effective practice in an allergy, ENT, or pulmonary setting.

I am honored to serve as your president this year. My goal this year as president has been to spread awareness that this exceptional organization exists, and to increase both membership in the AAPA-AAI, and participation in the annual meeting. After having the honor of working with the AAPA-AAI for five years now I have come to see just how much this organization exists for you, the member. I graduated from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA in 2010 with my master's degree in physician assistant studies. Unexpectedly my career began in the world of allergy, completely uncharted territory, and a specialty that I felt I had A LOT to learn about. I compare my first year in allergy to someone trying to drink from the tumultuous waves of the ocean. I had challenges both in the extensive amount of new clinical knowledge to absorb, but also in that I was the first PA my practice had ever had and I had to navigate an appropriate salary, contract, etc. Finally, in 2013, I found a life preserver...the AAPA-AAI.

I attended my first meeting with the AAPA-AAI at the 2013 AAPA national conference in Washington D.C. I immediately connected with many of the BOD members I now sit alongside today. They have served me personally as mentors, and this organization has helped to develop my clinical knowledge in the field of allergy, asthma, dermatology, pulmonology, and ENT. I also gained a network of resources that gave me knowledge and confidence on how to negotiate my salary, my contract, and when to welcome the opportunity to change practices. I also have had to opportunity of leadership within the organization starting as newsletter editor, serving as secretary, then president elect, and now finally as president. I am so proud to be associated this with organization and to call you my colleague!

Letter from President continued on the next page



A Letter From Our President Continued

Written by Amanda Hofmann MPAS PA-C
AAPA-AAI Current President

So, where do you go next? There are so many opportunities for you as a PA and for you as a member of the AAPA-AAI.

- Encourage a friend and/or colleague to inquire more about our organization (regardless of their specialty) and what we can offer to a practicing health care provider! Our mission is not only for PAs in allergy, asthma, ENT, and immunology! It is vital to patients and to our primary care colleagues to express the importance of correctly managing allergies, asthma, and immunology in a primary care setting, as well as when it is appropriate to refer.
- If you have not attended one of the AAI conferences, **WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!** Join us in San Antonio next summer! I know first-hand that the knowledge you will gain will improve your daily practice. And can you say network opportunity?
- If you are not involved in your community currently, I would strongly encourage you to set up a time to meet with school nurses, other health care providers, PA school programs and community centers to discuss topics in allergy, the existence and resources of our organization, and managing patients effectively.
- Write an article for our newsletter or for a peer reviewed magazine to help get information passed along.
- **INTERESTED IN LEADERSHIP?** We are always welcoming new members to the board and we have positions available if you are interested in serving. We have three positions available for the next term: President Elect, Secretary, Member at Large.

Thank you again for your membership, and continued support. Without YOU this wouldn't be possible or worth doing! Please contact me with any questions, concerns, needs, or if you would like to become more involved and serve in the organization. I am happy to help you in any way I can! I look forward to the future of our profession and the continued growth of our allergy "family!"



"Ogren pointed out that urban planners have unwittingly created urban allergy jungles that are contributing to an increase in allergic rhinitis and asthma problems, particularly in children."



The Real Bully in The Schoolyard

Written by Mike Calvin, PA-C
AAPA-AAI Member at Large

Tom Ogren was invited to The American Academy of Physician Assistants in Allergy, Asthma & Immunology annual CME conference in New Orleans to spread an important message and to possibly find a new ally. Ogren, an author, songwriter, and pollen-allergy researcher spoke before an assembly of Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners on a hot and humid day in New Orleans at this year's AAPA-AAI conference. He pointed out something that, perhaps, should have been obvious. After all, it's been right under our noses.

During this lecture, we learned that the pollen that causes the most severe allergic reactions comes from trees which have both male and female flowers, and from plant species that are solely male. Many arborists and landscapers like to plant male trees and shrubs because they are "litter-free" — that is, they produce no seeds or seedpods. But male trees shed lots of pollen; that's their job. And once it's released, it can be blown around for months.

Ogren came to realize that in the name of tidiness, for the cause of low maintenance, male trees and shrubs were being planted by the millions in our urban landscapes. Since males produced no seeds, fruits, messy flowers or old seedpods, they were considered far superior to female plants.

Ogren pointed out that urban planners have unwittingly created urban allergy jungles that are contributing to an increase in allergic rhinitis and asthma problems, particularly in children.

That these male plants would plague urban areas with huge amounts of allergenic pollen never seems to have been considered. And, for the most part, it still isn't.

One particular project caught the attention of his audience; The Allergy Free School Yard Initiative, first started in Canada by horticulturist Peter Prakke, utilizing the OPALS™ - Ogren Plant Allergy Scale. Many, if not most, school yards were landscaped so that they are especially allergenic. However, worldwide, school districts are starting to assess their own school yards, and a growing number are signing up to use only allergy-free plants in all future landscaping. It is quite possible now to produce great gardens and landscapes that do not trigger any allergies. Ogren described a plan for schools to reduce pollen allergies and related allergic asthma and openly encouraged the audience to take advantage of their standing in their communities to make a difference.

It is amazing how, as we work in the field of Allergy and Asthma, we sometimes forget to address what is quite literally 'under our noses', so to speak. We were very happy to have Tom Ogren share his message on reducing allergen exposure through our landscaping. Perhaps, with this knowledge, we can help better serve our patients.



Perspective: PAs in research

Amanda Hess, MPAS, PA-C
AAPA-AAI Secretary



A physician assistant working in both a clinical role as well as participating in clinic research can be hard to come by. We asked one of our members, Amanda Hess MPAS PA-C, about her experience working in clinical research.

"I am currently a physician assistant at San Tan Allergy & Asthma in Gilbert, Arizona. One of my supervising physicians is the owner and chief investigator of our research branch, Arizona Allergy and Immunology Research. I love working in allergy, asthma and immunology and love the idea that I am able to pursue other research interests within the field as well.

We often take part in Phase III clinical research trials for various medications. We have been enrolled in several studies evaluating the safety and efficacy of many medications we use for our patients today. One of the most rewarding parts about participating in clinical research is knowing that when a medication finally gets FDA approval and is available for use, I helped play a role in the research of that particular drug.

Another aspect of clinical research that I really enjoy the ability to help patients and improve their own clinical outcomes. At our office, we sometimes consider enrolling patients in research studies when we know there is a good chance they may actually have significant improvement from the medication being studied. Of course, there is always a chance of getting the placebo drug. However, since most clinical research trials monitor compliance with current medications (for example, inhaled asthma medications), often times a lot of our patients improve, even if they do get the placebo, because their overall compliance improves!

"I feel very fortunate to be involved in clinical research, and am very lucky that I am able to use my clinical knowledge base in allergy and asthma in doing so."

One of my most rewarding experiences thus far has been my involvement in clinical research studies for Dupilumab. Most of you reading this know, this drug has recently been approved for use in moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis, and is currently being studied in asthma and chronic sinusitis with nasal polyposis. During the course of the studies we have been a part of with Dupilumab, I have been able to witness the significant clinical improvements first hand which is very rewarding.

I feel very fortunate to be involved in clinical research, and am very lucky that I am able to use my clinical knowledge base in allergy and asthma in doing so. Because I have to do multiple trainings for every study I participate in, I feel that it makes me more knowledgeable about various disease states, pathophysiology, as well as the drug's pharmacology and properties. In our rapidly advancing field, I feel that being a sub-investigator keeps me up to date on the most recent data and research, drug developments, and the future of our specialty."

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We're on the Web!

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<https://www.aapaaai.org/>

Mark Your Calendars!

Next year the AAPA-AAI conference will be held on **August 3-5, 2018 in San Antonio, TX**. See you there!



Mission Statement

The American Academy of Physician Assistants in Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology strive to:

- Promotes the growth and development of physician assistants who have an active interest in the field of allergy, asthma, and immunology
- Provides the general membership with a forum for informal assembly regarding the issues that relate to physician assistants in allergy, asthma, and immunology
- Develops and maintains a speakers bureau for the Academy and its members
- Facilitates mutual assistance and support of physician assistants, health professionals, and health services by organizing and disseminating health care information through forums, panels, and other similar programs concerning the delivery and quality of health care services.



Do you have newsletter contributions or Suggestions?

Interesting article? General feedback? Suggestions on future pieces in the newsletter?

Please feel free to contact [Nicole Soucy MPAS PA-C](#), our current chair of member outreach. We are always excited to receive interesting information and suggestions on how we can better serve the members of this organization!