

## Letter from the President

It's time for our yearly Newsletter that has been put together by our Secretary Jeff Gold and Bill Begg who is our organization's relatively new editor. I believe you will find this Newsletter full of important informational items as we prepare for the upcoming TSDA meetings. First I would like to emphasize how fortunate we are to have recruited Bill Begg to our organization. Already he has worked diligently on the prerequisite curriculum project with Jeff, on the requisite curriculum project with Rich Shemin, and on our website. Thank you Bill. I would like to emphasize a few of the other important upcoming events and issues for the TSDA.

Probably the most important discussion we will have at the TSDA meeting in Ft. Lauderdale has to do with the eight recommendations for curriculum reform proposed by the Joint Council of Thoracic Surgical Education. I will not reiterate those eight bullets here as we have sent that memo to all TSDA members previously by regular mail and e-mail. The most important recommendations involve making ABS certification optional and looking carefully at new curricular options such as a core prerequisite surgical curriculum of three or four years followed by three years of TS education or a total six-year integrated program recruiting TS residents right out of medical school.

These recommendations have been reviewed by the ABTS and the Thoracic Surgery RRC and will be reviewed as well by the leadership councils of both the STS and AATS soon. The ABTS and the RRC have tentatively accepted the recommendations of the Joint Council. I would like to see the TSDA discuss these issues in an open forum and then determine the Program Directors' support for such change by vote. We can then report back to the Joint Council with further recommendations or support for the proposal as it presently stands.

The corollary issue related to curricular reform is subspecialty relationships to the present Departments of Surgery in general. Plastic surgery has dramatically revised their curriculum over the last 10 years and now Vascular Surgery is threatening to establish an independent Board. In thoracic surgery to date we have tried to work closely on education issues with general surgery (our prerequisite curriculum project is a case in point) rather than becoming confrontational. We have been frustrated with the American Board of Surgery, however, by their lack of response to our request to move the qualifying exam earlier so it wouldn't have as profound effect on our two year curriculum. To this end members of the TSDA Executive Committee have attended all of the Joint Council for Surgical Subspecialty

meetings sponsored by the Association of Program Directors in Surgery (APDS). Since many of these curricular issues are not unique to thoracic surgery, there has been some recent interest within the APDS to look more closely at curriculum reform. The Executive Council of the TSDA has made the decision to hold a combined meeting with the APDS early in April in Baltimore to share discussions related to curricular reform, board certification, attracting residents to surgery, gender, and work hour related issues. We hope this interaction will be mutually beneficial to program directors on both general and thoracic surgery. We need further discussions of these plans at the STS meeting of the TSDA.

Doug Mathisen is putting together an interesting program for this year's TSDA meeting looking at the potential crisis we are facing in TS related to the recruitment and retention of outstanding residents. There are some interesting statistics out there that our entering residents may be different and fewer from those in the past (not necessarily worse). Only 2% of thoracic surgery graduating residents are women but 50% of the medical school classes are women and slightly more of our residents are foreign medical graduates. Why? What are the factors involved with this shift and what can

# Bill Begg is New TSDA Website Editor

After graduating from Washington University in St. Louis in 1994 with a degree in History, Bill continued his work as a Research Assistant at Barnes Hospital and as an instructor for Kaplan Educational Centers. After a funding cutback, Bill moved to Michigan and began working for Kaplan full-time. He became well known within the company for his operations management skills, and was assigned the task of improving problem centers. This work took him from Ann Arbor to Cleveland, Akron, and finally Detroit and Ann Arbor again. While with Kaplan, Bill maintained some of the highest ratings of any instructor in the country, and traveled to various locations to train staff and other instructors.

Bill left Kaplan and signed on with Xfer, a telecommunications consulting company based in Ann Arbor. While there, Bill taught himself web programming, systems administration and learned the ins and outs of telecommu-

nications equipment. After six months, he moved to Washington, DC, to become the Systems and Web Administrator (the position was practically known as "All Things Technology" Administrator) at Independent Sector. He took on numerous projects while there, including the website redesign and rebuilding; securing funding for and upgrading all of the computer hardware in the organization; adding teleconferencing functionality that saved IS \$75,000 per year; as well as acting as Director of Technology. With that diverse experience, Bill then began working for TSDA in the role of Website Editor.

When not working, Bill is an avid (and not unskilled) golfer and cyclist.

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we do to reverse these apparent trends? I think the program is important and should be interesting.

We have very important reports from the Pre-requisite and Requisite Curriculum Committees. As you know Jeff Gold and Bill Begg have done a magnificent job getting the Pre-requisite curriculum discs out to half of the incoming 2002 thoracic surgery resident class. We are monitoring the Internet "hits" by those chief residents in general surgery and plans are in place to assess the short and long term efficacy of the product. Similarly, Rich Shemin is diligently improving the requisite curriculum, but this project will take longer to complete and will need additional support from new and older program directors. Having Bill

Begg around should make it easier for everyone to participate in this project.

We are also looking for ways to improve resident evaluations based on ACGME competency guidelines and if time allows at our meeting we will show some of the directions that project is heading. Overall I believe the meeting in Ft. Lauderdale is important and will be stimulating. I hope to see all of you at the end of January in sunny Florida.

My very best regards to all members of our community to have a healthy and happy holiday season. Hopefully 2002 will be an improvement over the past few months.

Ed Verrier, MD  
TSDA President

## Schedule of Meetings

**TSDA Meeting**  
**January 26-28, 2002**  
**Ft. Lauderdale, FL**  
**In conjunction with STS meeting**

**TSDA General Session**  
**Saturday, January 26, 2002**  
**Salon E**  
**Marriot Marina**

**April 1-2, 2002**  
**Baltimore, MD**  
**In conjunction with**  
**APDS Annual Meeting**  
**Baltimore Hyatt Regency**  
**Inner Harbor**

**May 4-7, 2002**  
**Washington, DC**  
**In conjunction with AATS meeting**

# PRC Update

The Prerequisite Curriculum CD-ROMs were distributed in early September. Sixty-two residents — out of the matched group of 131 residents — received the CD-ROM sets; the control group containing the remaining sixty-nine residents received an outline and appropriate references for the prerequisite curriculum (in lieu of the CD-ROMs) in a format that has been distributed in past years to newly matched residents.

The PRC CD-ROMs are in what we consider a final BETA, meaning that there will be updates to the product prior to its full release in July 2002. The updates will be minor and won't fundamentally change the experience for users (for instance, there will not be any new sections, nor will any section be deleted). The CD sets will be provided to program directors, current residents and others in this same time frame.

As of December 14, 2001, thirty-one of the sixty-two residents who received the CD-ROM had begun using them. In communications with the residents regarding their participation, the TSDA outlined that their prerequisite studies were not optional and that their progress through the curricu-

lum will be tracked by the TSDA. Of those residents who are using the curriculum, there appears to be consistent progress through the curriculum. This is tracked continuously for each resident. Mr. Bill Begg is tracking the progress of this group of residents.

To date, there have been no major installation problems, nor has there been any questions as to how to use the product. One resident did call to inquire whether there was a "best" path through the curriculum. A small number (5) of the residents in the control group did call or email inquiring if they would get CD-ROMs to study with. After explaining that they were part of the control group, all of them were fine with the study outline and looked forward to getting the CD-ROMs in July.

Bill has been contacting all of the residents who received the CD-ROM. He is asking each resident if they have installed and used to product, how many hours they've used it, and their perceptions of it effectiveness and ease of use. That survey will be complete by the end of December; another round of questions will occur in late February.

## TSDA Meeting Agenda

*The following is the agenda for the TSDA meeting (being held in conjunction with the STS meeting on January 26, 2002, in Salon E of the Ft. Lauderdale Marriott Marina Hotel, from 1:00-5:00pm*

Introduction:  
Doug Mathisen

Premedical school initiatives:  
Jeff Gold

Medical School externships:  
Doug Mathisen

Research Possibilities:  
Bill Baumgartner

Medical school and general surgery initiatives:  
Curt Tribble

Open Discussion

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## 2002 Match Appointments

*Data for the 2002 Match Appointments (match conducted in 2001)*

Registered Programs: 96

Withdrawn (no ROL): 1

Programs active in the match: 95

Programs filled: 84

Programs unfilled: 11

Positions offered in the match: 144

Positions filled: 131

Positions unfilled: 13

Registered Applicants: 167

Withdrawn (no ROL): 11

Active Applicants: 149

Matched Applicants: 131

Unmatched Applicants: 18

# CRC Update

In addition to the full rollout of the PRC in July of 2002, a companion project for the Requisite Curriculum (CRC) is slated to rollout as well. This project will differ from the PRC in that the CRC will be an Internet-project exclusively.

We continue to collect material for the product, anticipating that we will have all of the content in the next few months. By receiving the content well in advance of our deadline, we will be able to fully program and debug the product in the spring, then set about enhancing the tool with outside links or additional content.

Because the CRC will be an Internet-based application, we will be able to update and expand it rapidly without resorting to time-consuming development and distribution of CD-ROM sets. Another real benefit of this system will be the navigation system that will be used: users will be able to use several types of criteria to search for a series of topics. These topics will not be limited directly to the presentations, but include websites and online texts.

A sample of the navigation system will be posted online ([www.tsdatest.org](http://www.tsdatest.org)) for review in the coming months.

## TSDA Website Update

Bill Begg has recently redesigned and reconfigured the TSDA website. A sample of the new site will be available at <http://www.tsdatest.org>. If you have any suggestions for the TSDA website, please feel free to contact Bill Begg at [bbegg@tsda.org](mailto:bbegg@tsda.org) or call 703.820.7400.

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