

AASLD PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

AGENDA FOR 2010

INTRODUCTION:

AASLD will continue to implement an aggressive governmental relations program focused on promoting liver health through the conduct of federally-supported and other research and the expansion of the provision of services to patients, both adults and children, regardless of ability to pay.

RESEARCH ISSUES:

AASLD strongly supports funding for scientific research and training throughout the federal government, as well as from other funding sources. Specifically:

- AASLD supports the highest attainable funding levels to advance scientific progress rapidly throughout the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as envisioned by the Trans-NIH Action Plan for Liver Disease Research (TAPLDR), adopted by NIDDK in 2005 and periodically updated.
- AASLD is strongly opposed to the merger of NIAAA and NIDA, which will create no scientific benefit but will likely result in reduced funding for end-organ damage research.
- AASLD supports the creation of a comprehensive trans-institute liver research network at NIH that would assure the continuation of the benefits of existing network after their initial purpose has been completed.
- AASLD supports a distinct effort to bring additional research attention to highly lethal cancers, including primary liver cancer, through the National Cancer Institute.
- AASLD supports funding through AHRQ, NIH and CDC, as appropriate, to define accurately and completely, the burden of liver disease, including liver cancer.
- AASLD supports the highest attainable funding levels for liver research through the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense and other government agencies.
- AASLD supports legislation keeping all functions of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) (its consultative services, education and training, and research) consolidated, funded and available to researchers both within and without government until the Joint Pathology Center, which will replace AFIP, is operational.
- AASLD supports a robust Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER) program working through an HHS science agency that will assist hepatologists and their patients in making appropriate clinical decisions related to diagnosis and treatment, while assuring effective training in CER methodologies.

PATIENT CARE ISSUES:

AASLD supports federal policies and programs, as well as local action, that will improve liver health, enhance medical treatment for all patients with liver disease, reduce health disparities among liver disease patients, and promote liver wellness and prevention of disease. Specifically:

- AASLD supports the provision of liver health care to all Americans, regardless of ability to pay, through the passage and implementation of comprehensive health care reform to assure that treatment is provided.
- AASLD supports the highest attainable level of federal funding for states' efforts to prevent the spread of infectious liver diseases (particularly viral hepatitis), and to diagnose and treat those who are already infected.
- AASLD supports developing a stronger role with regard to chronic liver disease at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- AASLD strongly encourages the FDA to implement policies that aggressively address adverse events caused by inadvertent overdoses of acetaminophen, particularly related to compound drugs.
- AASLD supports an aggressive effort to diagnose and treat liver disease for veterans under the jurisdiction of the Veterans Health Administration and military personnel and their families under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense.
- AASLD strongly supports screening for viral hepatitis and other early detection strategies, as recommended by U.S. public health authorities.
- AASLD supports efforts to improve the quality of care provided to patients and will continue work to develop and implement quality measures related to liver disease.
- AASLD supports workforce and physician payment reform that ensures that patients will have access to a well trained workforce, as well as funding for K awards, T-32 awards, and related programs.

TRANSPLANTATION-RELATED ISSUES:

AASLD supports strong federal action to increase the number of cadaveric and living donor organs, including livers, available to be transplanted into patients who are eligible pursuant to current transplantation standards.

- AASLD supports increasing funding to promote organ donation programs directed by the federal government, as well as through the states, to the highest attainable levels.
- AASLD supports continuing research at the NIH designed to reduce the need for organs to be transplanted and designed to improve outcomes from transplantation.

KEY TACTICS

To fulfill its agenda, AASLD will continue to increase its visibility as the premiere scientific organization dedicated to the prevention and cure of liver disease and promotion of liver wellness. AASLD will:

- Meet at least annually with key leaders in NIH, CDC, FDA, AHRQ, the VA and other agencies, as well as in Congress through sponsorship of Liver Capitol Hill Day in collaboration with patients and key patient advocacy groups.
- Engage the AASLD membership in advocacy efforts that elicit support from lawmakers on legislation that advances the Association's public policy agenda, through the use of outreach technology.
- Inform decision makers via letters, emails and meetings concerning its accomplishments in liver education and important research breakthroughs made by AASLD members.
- Provide contact information sheets to ensure that the expert testimony of its members will be at the disposal of the press, state and national officials.
- Support the Governing Board in its efforts to obtain greater public recognition of liver disease and of AASLD's effort to fight it. Use this as a basis for press releases, press conferences, high visibility meetings, awards etc., as appropriate.
- Continue to refine policy statements on issues facing liver disease research and patient care. When approved, these statements will be posted on AASLD's website and distributed to all potential ad hoc partners.
- Work in partnership with government, industry and other nonprofit patient and professional associations to achieve these aims.