

2005 Chapter Leaders' Workshop Alabama Academy of Radiology

Chapter Meetings: Increasing Member Attendance and Participation **John T. Renz, MD**

Introduction:

The Alabama Academy of Radiology (AAR) was interested in developing a more robust and interesting program at its semiannual meetings. This was a goal that John Renz established upon becoming the president of the Alabama Academy of Radiology and was partially a response to meeting surveys. The hope was that the effort would increase member interest and participation in the AAR.

Initiatives:

- Surveying the membership to learn what types of programs were desired
- Forming a CME/Education Committee
- Researching to find a CME co-sponsor for the AAR
- Seeking Sponsorship for AAR meetings where feasible
- Forming alliances with other organizations to produce combined meetings and pool resources
- Moving the location for AAR Meetings around the state of Alabama or southern region
- Promoting Resident/Fellow involvement in the AAR and our meetings
- Planning for a social activity before and/or after the meeting.

Outcomes:

- ***Collection of Survey data to share with the AAR membership***
The AAR considers survey data critical. This information serves as the starting point for meeting planning. The AAR Executive Secretary, Natalie Munroe is very helpful collecting and organizing this information. Survey data is reported to the membership during each AAR Business Meeting so that everyone understands what our members are interested in and how we are doing at meeting their needs.
- ***Formation of a CME/Education Committee***
The CME/Education Committee, chaired by Dr. Loflin, was created to help the AAR focus attention to our educational goals and objectives. Through the efforts of this committee, we have expanded the number of courses and enhanced the quality of the AAR CME program. In the past, the AAR held educational meetings without providing CME. We have since learned that providing a CME program at the AAR Meeting is a strong incentive for members to attend our meetings and serves to increase attendance at the AAR meetings.

- Identification of a CME co-Sponsor***
 Great effort has been made to find the best possible CME co-sponsor. We have utilized Medical Association State of Alabama, American College of Radiology, and the Medical Society of Montgomery County during the course of two years before settling on the Medical Society of Montgomery County as our CME co-sponsor. The work was substantial but required to meet the needs of our organization.
- Sponsorship for meetings***
 Because of limited resources and the escalating costs of providing meetings, we have sought sponsorship to help defray some of the expenses of our meetings. Please note that the AAR does not charge members a fee to attend our meetings. We have worked with several groups during the past couple years with good success. We are very selective about our sponsors. We have been able to defray between 10-20% of the meeting costs through sponsorships.
- Formation of alliances with other professional organizations***
 We have sought to develop alliances with other professional organizations to produce a more robust meeting. An example would be the Tri-State Meeting of the Radiological Society of Louisiana, Mississippi Radiological Society, and the Alabama Academy of Radiology held at the Beau Rivage Resort, Biloxi, MS. 11/03. The combination of three ACR State Chapters for joint sponsorship of a meeting is a first that I am aware. This meeting allowed each chapter to benefit from the economies of scale provided by three chapters pooling resources in the interest of producing a really great meeting. The costs were significantly lower than commonly encountered. We were able to attract excellent sponsorship for the meeting. In addition, we were able to attract regional and national speakers for the meeting including representatives from the ACR. This is something that the AAR, RSL, and MRS were unable to do on their own. The challenges of this type of endeavor are several including coordination, location and scheduling.
- Varying the meeting location within the state***
 During the past couple of years, I have sought to move our meetings around the state to attract greater interest and participation by AAR members from around the state. Alabama, like other states, is fairly spread out geographically; Mobile to Huntsville is about 330 miles or 6 hours drive by car. Other than Birmingham, no spot is ideal. We continue to have the Annual Meeting each winter/spring in Birmingham, home to our greatest number of members. The summer/fall meeting has been moved around first in Biloxi, Mississippi in November 2003 and then in Orange Beach, Alabama in August 2004 (before hurricane IVAN!). This has created some extra work but seems to be worthwhile in attracting members to meetings from other parts of the state.
- Promoting Resident and Fellow involvement***
 The AAR remains very interested and committed in promoting residents/fellows involvement in the AAR and ACR. The AAR has set up a program to have a

resident/fellow present at our AAR meetings. This is rotated from among the three different training programs. The AAR sponsors three residents/fellows to the ACR Meeting each year and has done this for years. We have recently added the request that the residents/fellows attend the AAR Annual Meeting to qualify for sponsorship.

- ***Planning for social activities at the meetin***

To promote networking and a little fun with the meetings the AAR has attempted to sponsor a cocktail hour or a golf outing. This is an area of challenge as many members need to leave immediately after the meeting. A social activity tends to be secondary to travel needs and it can be difficult to find an activity that a majority of members are interested in participating.

Lessons Learned:

- It is important to assess the needs of your chapter members when planning a meeting; survey data is very helpful
- Getting CME sponsorship can involve substantial work but CME provides a great incentive for members to attend a meeting
- Sponsorship for meetings is an effective way to help reduce meeting expenses
- Pooling resources through the formation of alliances with other professional organizations can prove to be beneficial in reducing meeting costs and attracting speakers, however combining efforts with other organizations does present some challenges with regard to timing of the meeting, selecting a location and coordinating meeting details
- Sponsoring residents to attend the ACR annual meeting is a good way to promote resident and fellow involvement in the AAR and ACR
- Meetings should have an element of fun and allow for socializing and networking