



AmSECT

Today Feature

Celebrating Our Pioneers in Perfusion at the 50th International Conference in 2012

The AmSECT Mission

By Madeline Massengale

Politicians, pundits, and media representatives of late are all interested in looking back at the founding fathers of our country and debating some of the intent in drafting our Constitution. There is no unanimity of opinion. Even the lack of unanimity itself can be viewed as constructive or destructive. Nonetheless, to say that it provides for lively discourse is an understatement.

AmSECT President Susan Englert ended her report in the July/August issue of AmSECT Today with information regarding "Preparing for AmSECT's 50th Celebration" in March of 2012. This seems to be an appropriate time to look back at AmSECT's original mission and whether the Society now represents the organization and fulfills the intent that our founders envisioned.

Although it might seem presumptuous to compare AmSECT to the U.S. government, it can serve well as a microcosm. To the perfusion world, the mission statement of AmSECT is the bedrock and serves as our Constitution.

AmSECT's Mission Statement is on AmSECT's website followed by a brief history of the organization with a list of current activities.. "The mission of AmSECT is to foster improved patient care and safety by providing for the continuing education and professional needs of the extracorporeal circulation technology community."

Many members know that the statement has been modified periodically to modernize wording or make it more succinct and to reflect the current perfusion community. But has the mission itself been modified and/or changed? A search through my box of old AmSECT papers turned up two documents: Facts about AmSECT and An Introduction to AmSECT. It is probably safe to say that it wasn't fashionable 50 years ago to have a mission phrase as simply as it is today; therefore all the documents are wordy.

The fact sheet begins with this line "The American Society of Extra-Corporeal Technology was born in 1964 with the singular purpose of disseminating information necessary to the proper practice of all facets of the Technology. Over the years, this purpose has not changed." Then it states "As an academic/scientific professional society we exist to:

- Unite into one national organization with help of regional organizations all who practice or who are interested in the Technology of extra-corporeal circulation.
- Provide information and technical service to members in the interest of improved and expanded Technology.
- Leadership in promoting art of Technology, maximum standards of practice, acceptance by medical and public communities of standards for the Technology devoted exclusively to the best interests of patients and the art of medicine."

The introduction sheet begins "The American Society of Extra-Corporeal Circulation Technicians is an academic society formed in 1964 to promote intercommunications among heart-lung machine technicians, artificial kidney technicians, regional perfusion technicians and others who are concerned with the movement and treatment of blood in an extracorporeal circuit." (I even possess an AmSECT pin with thae name written around the sides and numbered 91 on the back.)

The stated purpose of the Society was the dissemination of information from multiple sources to insure "data is available to all." It continues

with a "major goal of the Society concerns with the development of a system of certification in order to engender a uniformity of experience... this leads to the necessity of an educational program in which a society journal....and it follows that there "must be stimulation of personal research."

I find it interesting that the word "technology" is always capitalized in the Fact sheet. It would appear that the transition from technician occurred between the introduction paper and fact sheet. The certification goal was accomplished and in 1974 was removed from AmSECT's mission. In the evolution of the Society, the artificial kidney technicians became such a limited membership that they removed themselves in 1976 to allow AmSECT to seek and receive recognition of perfusion as an "emerging health occupation."

A word about the goal of engendering a uniformity of experience among technicians is needed. Everyone was on-the-job-trained (OJT's) until at least 1971. The positive side of OJT was that they were individuals representing a background of diversity and rich personalities. A veritable melting pot of knowledge. The negative side of OJT was that employers had no means to determine competence of practitioners.

The medical world of extra-corporeal technology evolved, expanded, contracted and diversified in the years since those first mission statements were drafted and AmSECT has adapted to the changes. It has modified the mission statement as necessary. The backgrounds of today's perfusion members are still varied, but their education is reflective of formal programs that are both solidly academic and clinical.

To return to the USA government parallel, another example has been that states were added to the US territory since the Constitution and Bill of Rights were adopted. AmSECT added various categories of membership as well as welcoming international representatives. But is there more territory to add to the perfusion world? In President Englert's message, she gives a synopsis of the astonishingly large number of different topics important to perfusionists, demonstrating the diversity of the perfusion world and creativity in the exchange of knowledge at the 49th International Conference.

I believe that the scope of perfusion practice today, as exemplified by the dissemination of information at the conference, far exceeds anything the founders might have envisioned. It came to be largely because of the leadership of AmSECT. AmSECT gained political clout because it was the largest organization of perfusionists in the world and could speak as the voice of perfusion. If new perfusionists fail to see the benefits of joining AmSECT, membership will dwindle and the power to speak as one will be lost. With that loss will go the most important contribution to perfusion and the patients that AmSECT serves: Every AmSECT member's opportunity to influence the future of the profession.



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