

On "Being There"—Professionally

On about half the Sunday afternoons each autumn, a sell-out crowd of approximately 55,000 Washington, DC, area residents will pack RFK Stadium to watch the Washington Redskins professional football team do battle with one or another of its league rivals. This phenomenon occurs despite the fact that (a) each of those games can be watched on television for free from the comfort of one's home, (b) both the admission tickets and various incidental costs—such as parking and refreshments—are all very expensive, and (c) the stadium, its seats, and often the weather conditions leave much to be desired in the way of creature comforts. In fact, thousands of other people clamor for the opportunity to buy Redskins tickets even at prices above their already costly face value.

Similar fan enthusiasm is apparent in many other cities and with regard to various other sports both professional and amateur.

If one were to ask those sports fans why it is worth the expense, inconvenience, and discomfort to see the game in person when they can see it more clearly on color television, with professional audio commentary, and with the added dimension of instant replays, they will offer a variety of explanations. However, no matter how the replies are stated, virtually all of the explanations boil down to: "There is no adequate substitute for personally being there—namely, where the real action is!"

The same can be said with respect to professional and scientific meetings or conferences.

Reading newsletter summaries of the highlights of a conference, or reviewing journal articles covering research presented at a technical session, amounts to a very inadequate substitute for first-hand attendance at the meeting itself.

Moreover, in contrast to the sporting event, personal attendance at a meeting or symposium gives one many additional advantages and benefits. For example, one can personally meet and talk to the researcher, and ask questions and obtain clarifications and insights. There is also the opportunity to meet other experts or notables in the field; the opportunity to share experiences through informal conversation; and the opportunity to exchange other important career-related information such as job openings, employment benefits, and comparative remuneration. Finally, there is the built-in vehicle to become more active professionally and organization-wise through opening the door to voluntary participation, committee appointments, and elective office.

Many meetings or conferences can provide such opportunities. But for American pharmaceutical scientists, there are really two meetings that annually offer the greatest means of satisfying such needs and expectations. These are the combined APhA-APS Annual Meeting in the spring of each year, and the APS mid-year meeting in the fall.

The special benefit to be derived from these meetings is that the pharmaceutical scientist has the ready oppor-

tunity to broaden horizons via direct contact, dialog, and interchange with colleagues in other scientific fields as well as in other environments of practice. Hence, pharmaceutical scientists who are primarily chemists mingle and exchange views with others who are primarily pharmacologists, or biologists, or analysts, or whatever. And the person employed in industry not only associates with other industry colleagues but also others in academia, government, and elsewhere.

Furthermore, at the combined APhA-APS meetings, the scientist rubs elbows with and can have dialog with people not in science or research but who share a common interest and concern regarding pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical products; namely, community and hospital practitioners, pharmacy officials, and students.

All of this cannot help but have some effect and beneficial influence on the person so exposed.

In an effort to maximize the opportunity for professional growth and to make the experience of attending an APhA Annual Meeting even more valuable, the programming for the 1983 Annual Meeting in New Orleans is being organized into a series of four "tracks." One or more of these "tracks" will be of major interest and value to each registrant.

In the past, many registrants might have overlooked a session that would have been of interest simply because the session was sponsored by a group in another discipline. For example, the FDA pharmaceutical analyst might have ignored sessions dealing with institutional pharmacy on the assumption that he or she had no interest in "hospital pharmacy." As a result, that person completely overlooked the session on "Complying with FDA's Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) Regulations in the Hospital Pharmacy Manufacturing Laboratory."

Hopefully, the "track" system will eliminate future such oversights. Program content of special interest to practitioners, to scientists, and to students will be grouped in separate lists for ready and convenient reference by these respective people. So, too, will be grouped the broader, more general program content involving Association policy and general information. As a result, the "scientist track" will list not only APS sessions but also SAPHa programs on increasing graduate student enrollment, APP programs on comparative bioavailability of competing drug products, and APhA General Session speakers such as the Director of the National Institutes of Health or the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration.

Consequently, we urge our readers to make plans now to attend the up-coming APS National Meeting, November 14-18, 1982, in San Diego, California, and APhA-APS Annual Meeting, April 9-14, 1983, in New Orleans, Louisiana. "Being there" will be more important and rewarding than ever before.

—EDWARD G. FELDMANN
American Pharmaceutical Association
Washington, DC 20037