On Your Mark…Get Set…Go!

Stanton K. Shernan, MD, SCA President

Approximately 40 years ago, a young man who was designated to be the anchor leg of his nationally acclaimed high school track relay team was impatiently waiting for the baton to be passed to him in the most important event of his competitive athletic career—his last race. He saw his teammate rounding the final corner in the lead with his arm outstretched and baton in hand. The young man smiled because he had been given a substantial lead by his teammates. The baton was passed successfully as it had been practiced hundreds of times before. The young man knew that he could coast to the finish line and win easily, but he chose to run with maximum effort, not just because he wanted to, but because it was necessary—the team succeeded and established a new record.

Ironically, around the same time, another “relay” team with a very different objective was being formed. George Burgess, Robert Marino, and Martin Peuler, all anesthesiologists at the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans, decided to form a new national academic
organization called the Society of Cardiovascular Anesthesiologists (SCA) for those with an interest in the practice of cardiac and vascular anesthesiology who were denied membership into the elite Association of Cardiac Anesthesiologists. As the first President of the newly developed SCA, Bob Marino led the inaugural meeting in 1979. SCA has since enabled 22 Presidents to pass the baton in a perpetual relay of leadership for one of the most respected academic societies in its field worldwide.

The connection between these two events many years ago may seem obscure except for the fact that the young man running the anchor leg of his relay team was me. I now find myself smiling once again in the role as president of the SCA, because I have been honored to take the baton from the recently designated Past President, Christopher A. Troianos. Chris, along with the Board of Directors, has given me a solid lead in achieving our mission, which describes the SCA as “an international organization of health care professionals committed to excellence and leadership in providing excellent cardiovascular and thoracic patient care through education and research.” It is my sincere desire to repeat the events of the past and succeed by extending the momentum and lead I have been given. I am blessed to have an incredible team of advisors and mentors among the SCA Board of Directors, committee leaders, and SCA management group as this new journey begins. I will need their assistance and the important support of our SCA membership as we all begin a smooth yet exciting transition into the next decade.

We have many challenges ahead of us as we seek to sustain the current trajectory of achieving our goals, adapt when confronted with new challenges, and create a strategic vision for the short- and long-term future. The core values of our Society have focused on the areas of Leadership, Integrity, Innovation, and Teamwork. Within these values, Education and Research remain pillars that continue to be integral to our central mission. We have been fortunate to have had 41 outstanding Annual Meetings and 22 years of Echo Week, 8 Thoracic Anesthesia Symposia, and 3 PoCUS meetings to date. These will continue with a concerted effort to improve the content and format for maximal value to our members. In addition, SCA will be extending its international footprint by endorsing the annual meetings of the Chinese Society of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Anesthesia (CSCTVA) and the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA). I believe that international collaboration should become an even more important strategic initiative for our Society over the next couple of years. Furthermore, preliminary discussions have also begun on a national level with the leadership of the American Society of Echocardiography to extend our dossier of educational forums by organizing formal, named panel sessions at one of each other’s meetings. Each year, SCA has continued to further invest in research by funding 2 Kaplan Leadership Awards, 5 Early Career Investigator Awards, and SCA Starter and Mid-Career Grants.
As a new endeavor, an additional $200,000 per year for up to 3 years has been budgeted starting this upcoming year (2020) for an SCA (Multi-Institutional MiCoR Collaborative Clinical/Translational Research) grant that will focus on multicenter collaboration. The SCA is also aggressively continuing its effort to pursue a pathway for Cardiac Anesthesia Certification. Plans for both echocardiography and non-echocardiography examinations have already been developed with the National Board of Echocardiography, and high-level discussions are underway with the American Board of Anesthesiology with the goal of submitting a formal application by the end of this calendar year.

Leadership Development is a newer area of focus for our Society. Among several objectives in this priority includes concerted efforts to increase diversity among our leaders, with an emphasis on becoming more inclusive of women, minorities, and our youth. This year, the SCA has endorsed and sponsored the creation of a program featuring accomplishments of women in cardiovascular anesthesiology—Anesthesiology Women of Excellence, “AWESome Women”—and has established a Women in Cardiothoracic Anesthesia Special Interest Group. The Board of Directors recently approved the addition of 2 new Board of Director members, who will represent Early Career leaders in our field who are within 10 years of training completion, to assist in the creation and implementation of our strategic initiatives. We have more work to do in this area and are looking forward to receiving valuable insight from our membership.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we will seek to supplement the membership value of our Society not only by expanding upon the quality and quantity of our educational offerings and research support, but by improving our communication through our website, creating networking opportunities via SCA-sponsored social media, and providing mentorship for the next generation of leaders in our field.

As we approach the next decade, I am exceptionally honored and enthusiastically looking forward to serving as your SCA President. I welcome you all to join our team and support its mission.

Stanton K. Shernan, MD
SCA President

From SCA Newsletter. 2019 June; 18(3). Newsletter content may not be reproduced without permission of SCA.