

Southwest Chapter News



November 2002

2002–2003

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Southwest Chapter Holiday Gala

with a lecture by

Stanley J. Reiser, MD, PhD

“*Frankenstein* and Ethical Challenges in the Medical Future”

Tuesday, December 3, 2002

6 to 8 p.m.

Houston Academy of Medicine–Texas Medical Center Library
1133 John Freeman Avenue, Houston, TX

As we celebrate the coming year at the annual AMWA holiday gala, what better time to think about medical advances on the horizon and the implications these advances will have? What better time, too, to look back at a fictional work that, almost 200 years since its publication, can now be seen to have prophesied some of the ethical issues raised by 21st-century medical innovation?

When Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley wrote *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*, in 1818, she sensed that humans could cross the elusive boundary between the living and the dead. In the novel, Dr. Victor Frankenstein, a “pale student” of medicine, breathes life into a “hideous phantasm” who would ultimately resent his creator and demand, “How dare you sport thus with life?”

The AMWA Southwest Chapter is pleased to announce that Stanley J. Reiser, MD, PhD, Griff T. Ross Professor of Humanities and Technology in Health Care, Program on Humanities, Technology, and Health Care, The University of Texas–Houston Health Science Center, will present a lecture titled “*Frankenstein* and Ethical Challenges in the Medical Future.” Dr. Reiser will discuss the effects of technologic innovations on the doctor–patient relationship, focusing on real-life ethical challenges.

Available for viewing that evening will be the traveling exhibition *Frankenstein: Penetrating the Secrets of Nature*, which was developed by the National Library of Medicine in collaboration with the American Library Association and which has been on display this year at libraries throughout the country. The exhibit will be available for viewing at the library on the evening of the event. From 6 to 6:30 p.m., attendees will have the opportunity to socialize and to partake of delicious refreshments while viewing the exhibit. Dr. Reiser’s lecture will begin at 6:30 p.m.

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Southwest Chapter Medical Writing Conference an Unqualified Success!

On September 19, 2002, the AMWA Southwest Chapter Medical Writing Conference was held at the Hickey Auditorium of The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. The first Southwest Chapter conference to be organized in more than 15 years, the event attracted more than 75 participants from seven states.

Southwest Chapter President Tom Gegeny opened the event by presenting a brief orientation and an overview of the day's proceedings and acknowledging the Department of Scientific Publications at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center and the Southwest Chapter board members for helping to coordinate the conference. He then thanked the immediate past president, Lorraine Cherry, PhD, for her effort and dedication as a board member during the previous three years, presenting her with a beautiful etched-glass award in recognition of her service. Accepting the award, Dr. Cherry gave a brief speech in which she thanked the chapter members for making her time as president so worthwhile and recognizing Tom Gegeny for his assistance during her term.

In the plenary lecture, Lisa A. Bero, PhD, discussed the conflicts of interest raised by commercial funding of research in academic settings, outlining lessons to be drawn from industry-sponsored research on the effects of tobacco on human health. She explained how the tobacco industry initiates research designed to raise controversy in order to maintain a public perception that the data on the health risks of second-hand smoking are inconclusive. Such controversy, Dr. Bero explained, stalls legislation that could harm the industry's financial interests. Through sophisticated statistical analyses, Dr. Bero showed the bias of tobacco industry-funded research as a whole and explained how some companies hide their affiliation with the research they fund. For instance, when the Hirayama study reported dangerous effects of passive smoking, one tobacco company designed and funded a



Dr. Lisa Bero presents the plenary lecture, entitled "Industry-sponsored tobacco research: lessons in conflicts of interest for academia."

counter-study in an attempt to refute the previously published findings, appointing two nominal authors from Japan but failing to acknowledge the principal investigator or his affiliation with the tobacco industry. Dr. Bero reminded attendees of the importance of full disclosure of commercial affiliations in authorship and funding, a useful ethical lesson for all medical communicators. A professor in the Department of Clinical Pharmacy at the University of California in San Francisco, Dr. Bero is an expert in research ethics who has developed and validated methods for evaluating quality of research and scientific publication, including relationships between industry and universities.

After the lecture, lunch was served by M. D. Anderson's catering department, and attendees had the chance to explore the Texas Medical Center. Most of the attendees then participated in one of the three AMWA core curriculum workshops that were offered: Punctuation for Clarity and Style, led by Lynn M. Alperin; Journal Submissions Other than Research Articles, led by Barbara Gastel, MD; and Organizing the Biomedical Paper, led by Marianne Mallia.



Southwest Chapter President Tom Gegeny opens the conference and gives a brief overview of the day's schedule.

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Southwest Chapter Medical Writing Conference *(continued from page 2)*

Attendees at this year's conference comprised 44 AMWA members and 35 nonmembers. A few of the participants were students at the Texas Medical Center whose registration fees were sponsored, in part, by Dr. John P. McGovern. The chapter was especially pleased to welcome out-of-state attendees, including three from New York, one from Washington, one from New Mexico, one from North Carolina, and two from Louisiana. Other out-of-town attendees included individuals from Austin, El Paso, Dallas, and San Antonio.

The responses submitted by conference attendees in the feedback surveys were generally very positive and included helpful suggestions for future conferences. Indeed, Southwest Chapter board members are already taking preliminary steps to plan the next conference, which is expected to take place in April 2004. That conference is expected to be a full-day event and to offer participants the opportunity to take two AMWA workshops, including AMWA advanced curriculum courses. If you would like to share your ideas or to assist in conference planning, please contact Kate Ó Súilleabháin (Caitcinnor@aol.com, 713.851.3917) or Lisa Wann (EWann@lexgen.com, 281.863.3373).



Past President Dr. Lorraine Cherry accepts an award given to her in recognition of her three years of service as a board member.



Southwest Chapter Holiday Gala *(continued from page 1)*

The HAM–TMC Library is located in the Jesse H. Jones Library Building, 1133 John Freeman Avenue, in the Texas Medical Center in Houston. (Please enter the library at the ground floor of the building and take the staircase down to the common area.) Attendees are advised to park either in Garage 3, which is located beneath the Jesse H. Jones Library Building and which can be accessed from Bertner Street on the east side of the building, or in Garage 4, which is located one and one-half blocks east of the HAM–TMC library and which has entrances on McGregor Street and Ross Sterling Street. For more detailed directions to the library, please visit <http://www.library.tmc.edu/locate.html#directions>. Parking costs about \$6 for two hours.

This year's holiday party is being offered free of charge to AMWA members and nonmembers. We look for strong participation by our members and also hope

that the event will attract new participants with an evening of excellent fare for both the intellect and the palate. The party will be catered by the Central Market, which will provide hearty hors d'oeuvres to include an array of meats, breads, cheeses, and seasonal fruits. Dessert will consist of tempting holiday pastries and cookies. Nonalcoholic cider will be served at this function, as will a selection of soft drinks.

Registration for this event is not necessary. For more information on the holiday gala, please contact Kate Ó Súilleabháin at Caitcinnor@aol.com or 713.851.3917. For information on the traveling exhibit at the library, contact Beatriz Varman at Beatrizv@library.tmc.edu or 713.799.7169.

AMWA Southwest Chapter News

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From Your Chapter President

November 2002

Dear AMWA Southwest Chapter members,

As president of the Southwest Chapter, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the US Internal Revenue Service has granted the Southwest Chapter of AMWA 501(c)3 status as a nonprofit, educational organization!

Many thanks go to Immediate Past-President Dr. Lorraine Cherry for all her hard work on this mammoth task. Thanks to all the chapter members who voted on changing the Chapter Bylaws to include language required of 501(c)3 organizations. According to Secretary Laurel Prokop, the final vote was 58 FOR, 0 AGAINST, 2 ABSTAIN. With this new tax-exempt status, our chapter and regional programs will be eligible for tax-deductible contributions that can reduce costs and allow such events to be more widely publicized to general and academic audiences. If you have any questions or would like to recommend a sponsor that might be interested in funding Southwest Chapter lectures (*anywhere* in the chapter) or programs like the student scholarship competition, please contact me or Treasurer Chris Wogan.

Also, I would like to welcome some new members to the Southwest Chapter: Debra L. Sunday, BS, MLS; Jeanie Woodruff; Candice A. Welhausen, MA; Suzanne J. Speaker; Shirley Williams; Kristofer S. Griffith; Raymond J. Cranston, MD; Alexandra G. Woods; William F. Miller, JD; Amy C. Gallagher, CNC, PFS; Tamra N. Oner; James P. Morgan, MA; Denise M. Evans; Tonya Wolford, MED; and Barbara L. Hoffman, MD; and Renee Robillard. Welcome!

Finally, congratulations to Susan Siefert for being awarded an AMWA Fellowship and to Marianne Mallia for being elected to the office of National President of AMWA at the Annual Conference this past week in San Diego. Southwest Chapter members are leaders locally and nationally in AMWA!

Many Southwest Chapter members were able to attend the Annual Conference this year, and I was able to meet many of them at the Chapter Social. There is a great desire to have local AMWA meetings and gatherings in all the regions of the Southwest Chapter, and there are funds and resources available to do so. If you have any ideas or would like to help plan or participate in an upcoming meeting, please contact me or your regional director (www.amwasouthwest.org/officers.htm) as soon as possible.

The Southwest Chapter is on the move! I am looking forward to this year being one of the best yet.

Thomas Gegeny

President, AMWA Southwest Chapter