SETTING STANDARDS IN THE THEN-NASCENT FIELD OF CELLULAR THERAPY

In last month’s issue, we covered the origins of the Biology of Blood and Marrow Transplantation (BBMT Journal). In this issue, we look at how the formation of ASBMT helped change national regulations in regard to cellular therapies.

Every industry needs regulations to ensure the safety of those who work in it, and those affected by it—especially if those industries center on extremely intricate medical care. Although there is seemingly no shortage of mechanisms in place to keep patients safe in today’s world, things weren’t always that way.

For those working in the field of cellular therapy and blood and marrow transplantation, so much of what influences today’s regulatory standards were designed and advocated by ASBMT and its partners when the field was just emerging. More than 90 percent of eligible U.S. cellular therapy centers are accredited by the Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy (FACT), which was the brainchild of ASBMT and the International Society for Cellular Therapy (ISCT). In 1996, the two groups teamed up to start the accreditation group, which uses rigorous inspection standards and peer networks to set a standard of care for patients.

“Although it’s always a painful process for each center to go through that accreditation process, on the positive side, it’s really raised the standard of care,” said Richard E. Champlin, M.D., ASBMT’s first president in a commemorative video chronicling the first 10 years of the society. “As each center has had to address their own organization and standards—and prepare for that inspection—it’s improved [their] own internal processes. Each center—even the most prestigious—has had issues raised in the course of their review that have led to improvements in their program.”

Before the founding of FACT, the transplantation concentration was what ASBMT founding member Joseph H. Antin, M.D., called “wild.” Working as a consultant with insurance companies back in the early days of ASBMT, Antin recalled coming across transplantation centers with extremely varying sets of standards. Many operators had no formal training, but insurance companies had no set of qualifications to determine which centers were acting in good faith and which weren’t.

“That had generated a great deal of concern among those of us who did have a more organized and academic approach to it amongst the insurance companies who didn’t really have a good mechanism to determine who was a serious player in this business—who they could trust to provide good medical care to their enrollees,” Antin said. “You could set up a transplant program on a shoestring budget and you could basically call yourself a transplanter, and you were one.”

Antin and several others set out to create a set of standards for reviewers—whether they were from insurance companies or government agencies like the National Institute of Health—to better analyze how organizations were performing. Soon came accreditation and continuing education for blood and marrow transplant centers that previously hadn’t existed.

However, it wasn’t just those working in the field who wanted a clearer set of standards. Federal regulators were also interested in creating a more reliable standard for groups working in cellular therapies. Keith Sullivan, M.D., another founding member of ASBMT, said many members noticed how many changes were happening in the industry at the time. Regulators were struggling to understand exactly how cellular therapies worked and what the best practices should be. Several called upon the ASBMT and similar organizations to create some sort of benchmark that would be based off the latest scientific and translational goals of the time. And thus, FACT was born.

Sullivan said hammering out those best practices—coupled with the group’s dedication to continued education and sense of community—has helped create better standards over and over again.

“That’s been one of the hardest things,” Sullivan said. “And I think the society, and the friendships formed across different centers, is an invaluable resource. I think as our jobs continue, and as every new aspect arises, we think about what we can do to make it safer for the patients and what we can do to standardize our experience.”

Comments in this article originally appeared in a short documentary on the beginnings of ASBMT, “ASBMT The First 10 Years,” which was produced and distributed in 2003.

Association News and Updates

What’s New With ASBMT

REGISTER FOR THE ANNUAL ASBMT FALL CLINICAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE FOR NPS, PAS AND FELLOWS

Registration is open for ASBMT’s annual Fall Clinical Education Conference. This year’s conference is in collaboration with the Sarah Cannon Blood Cancer Network and National
Marrow Donor Program®, Be The Match®, and will be held in Nashville, Tenn. Breakout sessions will cover topics ranging from clinician well-being to the latest in transplantation research. A few highlights in this year’s agenda include clinical care advancements, a “Best of Tandem” review and a half-day of pediatric BMT lectures.

The three-day conference will be packed with education for the ASBMT community, including specific breakout sessions based on adult or pediatric care. If you’re already planning on joining, you can book your hotel stay for the conference in advance; visit the ASBMT site for more information and to register.

When: September 20-22, 2018
Where: Omni Nashville Hotel, Nashville, Tenn.

If you are interested in becoming a Sponsor or an Exhibitor for this conference please email Angie Dahl at angiedahl@asbmt.org.

ACCME ACCREDITATION STATEMENT
This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education through the joint providership of The Medical College of Wisconsin and National Marrow Donor Program. The Medical College of Wisconsin is accredited by the ACCME to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

AMA CREDIT DESIGNATION STATEMENT
The Medical College of Wisconsin designates this live activity for a maximum of 16.50 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)™. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

HOURS OF PARTICIPATION FOR ALLIED HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS
The Medical College of Wisconsin designates this activity for up to 16.50 hours of participation for continuing education for allied health professionals.

NURSING CREDIT
The National Marrow Donor Program is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Commission on Accreditation (COA).

Up to 16.50 contact hours may be claimed for this educational activity.

Attendees must complete and submit the online evaluation within 30 days of the activity to receive continuing education credit or a certificate of completion.

Register for the event at asbmt.org.

2018 BMT TANDEM MEETINGS: SESSION RECORDINGS NOW AVAILABLE
Tandem 2018 recorded sessions are ready for purchase! Registered attendees can purchase and download available recordings from the February conference for a flat fee. Non-attendees can purchase individual sessions as well. Once you choose the content you’d like to purchase, you will be instructed to enter further information regarding registration status and payment. Please contact TCTMeetings@mcw.edu if you have any questions or issues.

NEW ONLINE ENDURING CASE PRESENTATIONS AVAILABLE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS
The ASBMT Pharmacy Special Interest Group (SIG) Program Planning and Education Committees, in partnership with Syntaxx Communications, recently launched the Online Enduring Case Presentations. This joint venture is a benefit provided to those practicing in hematopoietic cell transplant (HCT) who are seeking continuing education but were unable to attend the ASBMT Tandem Meeting. ASBMT members receive 50 percent off ACPE credit courses with the discount code MEMBER2018.

Courses (ACPE and/or FACT credit available):

• Maintenance Therapy Strategies Post-HCT
• Biology of cGVHD

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR CORD BLOOD CONNECT IN SOUTH BEACH
Registration for Cord Blood Connect is now open for their September summit. The international congress embraces all components of the cord blood community, in both public and private banking, clinical and laboratory investigations, manufacturing, admissions, training and education. ASBMT is one of 13 non-profit organizations who will collaborating to create this congress. The event runs from Sept. 14 through Sept. 16 in South Beach, Fla.

Register for the event on the Cord Blood Association’s website. Members of CBA can register for a discount.