

## Connecting with industry

AACC's industry division brings together a community of IVD test developers.

Harvey Kincaid

It's official. The American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC; Washington, DC) recently sanctioned the creation of a permanent division devoted specifically to the interests of association members involved in the IVD industry.

The idea for an industry division was initially conceived four years ago, in 1998, when a group of AACC members formed the division. Following AACC's bylaws, a division must function satisfactorily as a provisional division for three years before it may apply to be considered for permanent status. Mary Lou Gantzer, director of clinical and scientific affairs in the chemistry/immunochemistry group at Dade Behring (Newark, DE) and the current president of AACC, was the division's first chairperson, and she played an instrumental role in leading the group through its formative years.

The organizers' primary objective was to create a division that offered AACC members connected with the IVD industry an opportunity to share their experiences and learn from one another. The idea took off immediately, and the industry division started out with more than 400 members.

The industry division has three major objectives:

- Characterizing the numerous work settings of division members and the needs of members in those settings.
- Developing and implementing educational opportunities focused on the issues and needs common to the members of the division.
- Providing communication links between division members and clinical laboratorians to enhance cooperation and promote synergies.

### Identifying Member Needs

From the very beginning, the industry division has welcomed members who come from different backgrounds. On one hand, the division reaches out to those in industry who are directly involved in developing, testing, and bringing to market innovative diagnostic products. On the other hand, the division has also sought to engage those people outside of industry who have an impact on and contribute to the development of tests, including academics, clinical researchers, and laboratorians. In short, the industry division's membership includes those individuals who want to stay informed and learn about what is happening in the diagnostics industry and are interested in the advances in technology and manufacturing in general.

To help ensure that the industry division stays on track, its leadership is planning a new questionnaire for its members as well as others in AACC who are potential members and want to find out what the division has to offer.

### Providing Education

Education is one of the primary activities in which the industry division participates. Since its inception, the division has been involved in facilitating and hosting a variety of educational programs associated with the AACC annual meeting or with the gatherings of other organizations. Even as a provisional division, the industry division worked with other AACC divisions to organize Edutrak sessions, audioconferences, workshops, and seminars. In November 2000, the division cosponsored a workshop on measurement and traceability issues with the National Institute of Standards



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and Technology (Gaithersburg, MD).

For the past few years, the industry division has sponsored the OEM lecture series, a regular program at the AACC annual meeting. This lecture series offers AACC members a stimulating look at a wide array of products that suppliers have developed for application in diagnostic products and other innovations that may eventually find their way into routine clinical laboratory operations. For this year's lecture series, the industry division has accepted 17 abstracts for presentation. The topics that will be presented include material about how to make a cooperative venture work, new tools for research and development, and

new products to take to market.

Through its educational activities, the industry division endeavors to keep its members informed about issues that are affecting the international IVD market. At this year's AACC meeting, for example, the division is sponsoring an Edutrak session on establishing calibrator traceability. At this session, a panel of speakers will discuss the use of standards for assigning traceable calibrator and control values and the differences between traceability and a mere demonstration of accuracy.

Through this session and other such educational programs, the industry division intends to foster a better understanding between the industry and the end-users of calibrator and control materials, and hopes to encourage a more global approach to these issues.

### **Making Connections**

Another activity that the industry division is pursuing is networking. As a permanent division, the industry division has now come of age and is dedicated to serving as a bridge between the

needs of the practicing clinical chemist and the industry community that develops new diagnostic products.

The division is seeking opportunities to network with its sister divisions within AACC as well as with other groups and organizations. The division chair, Katie Smith, who is also senior director of diagnostics clinical research and regulatory affairs at Prometheus Laboratories (San Diego) and a member of the *IVD Technology* editorial advisory board, has been spearheading these efforts. Such inter-AACC networking efforts include reaching out to the local sections of AACC. The industry division has been contacting the program chairs of the local sections to seek out ways the division can assist with educational activities. The idea is to offer educational programs at the local level, while providing the industry perspective during the AACC annual meeting through its Edutrak sessions, workshops, and other programs.

As for networking efforts beyond AACC, the industry division is looking at ways to work with a number of dif-

ferent organizations. Lou Dunka, principal scientist in the professional affairs department at LifeScan (Milpitas, CA) and the industry division's chair-elect, has been active in AdvaMed (Washington, DC) and has been developing relationships with that organization.

Other organizations that the industry division envisions itself networking with include the American Chemical Society (Washington, DC) and the American Society of Clinical Pathologists (ASCP; Chicago). With the ASCP, the division is looking for ways to narrow the gaps between the expectations of traditional ASCP-certified personnel and typical industry practices.

### **Conclusion**

The industry division's plan is to continue sponsoring programs that provide education about developments in the IVD industry, and networking with other groups both inside and outside of AACC.

For information about joining the industry division, access AACC's Web site at <http://www.aacc.org>. 