

Message From the President

This is my first Circular letter as your President, and there is a lot to report.

GAP is a thriving organization of psychiatrists dedicated to being on the cutting edge of the interface between psychiatry, the rest of medicine, and society at large. In contrast to other psychiatric organizations, GAP has been gaining members and our committees have been very productive. At this meeting, we learned that the Publications Committee (chaired by David Adler) approved 20 publications from 16 different committees since the last meeting. Yet GAP, like other organizations, faces serious financial challenges. As reported at the meeting, we have both short-term and long-term issues. In the short run, we have not been as successful as we have been in the past at raising outside funds, and in order to meet our obligations without unduly invading our reserve, we passed a \$100 dues assessment for all members this year. It was passed by a very large majority with very little dissent, and a number of members were writing checks at the meeting to Frances, our Executive Director. Of more concern in terms of short-term and immediate cash flow issues is the large number of members (well over 100) who have not paid their calendar year 2015 dues. Larry Gross, our Treasurer, made an impassioned plea for people to pay their dues, and we both asked the membership for ideas as to how we might rightsize the organization in the next period of time so that we don't have to experience another emergency assessment.




The goal of what will be proposed as part of next year's budget and subsequent years is to develop a self-sustaining and sufficient GAP without relying on outside funding. This will probably necessitate a sizable dues increase or some combination of a dues increase and a registration fee for the meetings themselves. It was widely appreciated that our membership must pay for the cost of the organization. We can no longer rely on significant outside contributions. Many other ideas were discussed, such as making it mandatory for people to pay their dues before they can attend a meeting, a tiered system of dues payment, rewarding people who pay dues early and penalizing those who pay dues late. A number of fund raising ideas were also explored, and the chairs of committees were challenged to find products of GAP that can be of financial value to the organization as a whole.

The Dear Abby Award was unveiled as an opportunity for GAP to honor an individual or organization who has contributed to innovation in mental health in the advancement of psychiatry. The awardee will be in keeping with GAP's mission of working at the interface between psychiatry and society and Dear Abby's mission of spreading education and awareness of mental health issues. Jeanne Phillips (Dear Abby) enthusiastically supported this idea and will be present when we make the first award at the meeting in April 2016.

As your President for the next two years, I am making myself available for your ideas and input as to how GAP can continue to be a thriving organization with financial stability. Send your ideas either directly to GAP or to me at ssharfstein@sheppardpratt.org.

With great excitement, we unveiled the new website, which can be accessed through (give the website address). In a separate communication, we will provide information as to what the website can accomplish for work among and within committees and for communication with the outside world. It is a website of which we can be proud. Many thanks to Aaron Krasner and his consultant, Wayne Carpenter, for getting us off the ground.

I never imagined 45 years ago when I was a GAP Fellow that one day I would be GAP President.


Steven S. Sharfstein, M.D.
President, GAP