



TO: MSMR Members

FROM: William Barbo, Chairman

DATE: June 23, 2023

RE: Chairman's Report to the MSMR Annual Meeting of Members

As we mark MSMR's 70th anniversary this year, it is my pleasure to present my report on the standing and activities of the Society over the past year, as well as a look ahead to the next 12 months.

While we seem to be, in large measure, past the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, how MSMR – and pretty much everyone else in the world – has had to alter its business practices remains evident.

First and foremost, we've finally been able to return to in-person activities. We held a very successful **Biomedical Research Day** (the first in three years) last October that we were pleased to host at Charles River Labs in Shrewsbury, and we did so in conjunction with our fall Board of Directors meeting. This is a practice we want to continue going forward, because it's important that we're able to gather in person at least twice each year. As productive and efficient as some of our online gatherings have been, I think you'd all agree that there is no replacement for being able to interact, converse with, and catch up with our colleagues. That is, after all, one of the principal objectives of any professional membership association: to leverage and take advantage of our common experiences, expertise and reasoning.

This spring, our two signature events were finally held again in person, beginning with another well-received **Three I's, Biosecurity and Research Integrity Conference**, held in April in Chapel Hill, N.C., in concert with our partners the North Carolina Association for Biomedical Research (NCABR); the FBI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate; and the Maine Regulatory Training and Ethics Center (MeRTEC). Not only was this the first *Three I's* conference held in person since 2019, it also marked our 25th anniversary of this best-in-class event, which is truly a significant accomplishment for any event, not even accounting for the disruptions faced since the onset of the COVID pandemic.

And, just two weeks ago, several hundred people gathered in this same venue for MSMR's 15th Anniversary **Laboratory Enrichment Symposium**. This symposium was presented in a 'hybrid' format, with participants also able to participate remotely via Zoom and the Whova conferencing app. But we've decided that will be the last hybrid event (barring, of course, another public health emergency), primarily due to the costs and complications associated with staging such events. (This also allows me the opportunity to say a special 'thank you' to MSMR Vice President Lynne Walsh for all of the hard work she puts in every year to make these events such successes, but never more than over the last three years, when she had to adapt day-to-day to the circumstances being thrown at her.)

Massachusetts Society for Medical Research
73 Princeton Street – Suite 311
North Chelmsford, MA 01863
T: 978.251.1556 | E: info@msmr.org
W: www.MSMR.org



There are also some events that were created to help our members maintain contact and camaraderie during the pandemic that we found were so successful popular, we've continued them. One such offering is our popular **Lab Chat Café** series, which brings together our members in a series of 'virtual water cooler' discussions. This year, responding to feedback from our members, that series included several topics related to employment that proved to be very popular, and included topics ranging from employee recruitment and retention; to supporting neurodivergent colleagues; to addressing diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.

MSMR also continues to be a leader in online professional development offerings. Once again this year, we hosted four sold-out sessions of our popular **IACUC Online Training** in each quarter of the year, and also held another popular session on **Introduction to Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBCs) and Supporting Programs**.

Targeted training is also something MSMR has prided itself on over the years. When members present us with a particular challenge or opportunity, we've been able to turn those into networking or training events, including this past December when we hosted **Dr. Erin Bryant Hall**, the new Commissioner of Laboratory Animals for the city of Cambridge, Mass. , for a Virtual Town Hall Meeting, helping our Cambridge-based members better understand her role in overseeing laboratory animal use in the city, while also introducing Dr. Bryant Hall to MSMR's members. (Dr. Bryant Hall's presentation continues to be available on the Member's Only portion of the [MSMR website](#).)

Public policy monitoring, communications and inputs continues to be a hallmark of MSMR's member services. This year, we saw a longstanding issue in Massachusetts result in the enactment of a law to encourage the adoption of dogs and cats used in medical research, but in such a way that it allows our member institutions to continue their longstanding practice of facilitating private adoptions, without putting any new onerous requirements on them.

However, politics being politics, our team in the new year met yet another attempt to expand on that law, which our president, Jim O'Reilly, and our legislative agent, Patrick Huntington, will speak to further at the Annual Meeting, but which we are confident will be defeated.

We also continue to track and provide input on a variety of legislation from across the region. And, looking beyond our region, we see that we are always interconnected with others from around the country and the world who are also working to protect and promote biomedical research. MSMR remains a cornerstone of States United for Biomedical Research (SUBR), a collective of similar organizations from around the country that works in concert to share strategies and expertise to address public policy issues of importance to all of us. We work closely with other national groups, including the National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR); Americans for Medical Progress (AMP); and the Institutional Officials Consortium (IOC).

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That national coordination has been evident this year in a few different ways, including MSMR's representation in the [U.S. Animal Research Openness Initiative](#), an effort to increase the number of institutions that are engaging in meaningful public conversations about the importance of animal contributions to science. MSMR President Jim O'Reilly continues to staff one of the committees of the Openness Initiative and serve as the liaison for the collective MSMR membership.

And he also coordinates with national partners on important policy issues that may arise suddenly, such as the crisis resulting from changes to import regulations for non-human primates, where MSMR has both had a voice and also has been able to counsel some of its own members who have found themselves unwittingly in the spotlight as a result of this issue.

Counseling on issues such as crisis communications preparedness and response, security and public positioning remains an extremely critical role that MSMR plays in helping our members counter some of the harmful and misleading claims that animal rights groups often make against their institutions. This support is ongoing and, according to several of our members, of very high value.

In short, MSMR, I believe, provides the benefits that a professional membership association should. Some of these benefits are provided by our staff of two, but many are the result of volunteer efforts from many of you, our members, who give your time and talent to help share your best practices, your advice or your experiences. As I've said to you before, it is the collective strength of all of us together that makes MSMR what it is – and has been for the last 70 years.

Back in 1953, the heads of what were at the time the three medical schools in Massachusetts – Tufts, Harvard and Boston University – got together to form MSMR as a means of countering the misinformation regarding animal research that was being promoted from among the anti-vivisection voices of the day. Seventy years later, that importance of providing that public voice of the vital role played by animals in medical research remains, but has evolved to embody an organization that offers so much more to so many more professionals in this space. I am extremely proud to be part of such an organization, and to count you all as colleagues and peers in the goal of promoting and enhancing biomedical and biological research, including the humane care and use of animals, for the improved health and well-being of people, animals, and the environment. I also want to acknowledge the leadership of our President, Jim O'Reilly for his unwavering commitment to our mission and in particular his partnership with the Board in the execution of that mission.

As we look ahead to the next 70 years, we will always seek to enhance the benefit of membership across our ranks; remain a leading voice in the region and nation in promoting and protecting biomedical research; and provide a place for professionals to gather, share and learn from each other.

As always, thank you to each and every one of you for all you do.

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