

Congratulations from the IARS!

ON the occasion of its 25th anniversary, the International Anesthesia Research Society (IARS) applauds the Foundation for Anesthesia Education and Research (FAER) for its prodigious contributions to the science of anesthesiology and to the careers of numerous anesthesiology investigators and educators.

Founded in 1986, FAER's stated mission is to "advance medicine through education and research in anesthesiology." Specifically, FAER was started at a time when external metrics indicated that the specialty of anesthesiology was not effectively competing in the arena of biomedical science. Total National Institutes of Health funding to departments of anesthesiology in 1985 was \$12.3 million, a mere 0.5% of total expenditures.¹ FAER wisely targeted the career development of physician-scientists through a program of fellowship and starter grants. These granting mechanisms have successfully bridged trainees from residency to funding as National Institutes of Health investigators. Surveys have demonstrated a huge return on investment from this strategy as measured by extramural grants, publications, and the continued research careers of former grant recipients.² The strategy may also have affected external metrics; by 2003 National Institutes of Health funding to departments of anesthesiology had grown to \$97.2 million and 0.9% of total expenditures.

Although the eightfold growth in National Institutes of Health research funding to departments of anesthesiology from 1985 to 2003 is a major accomplishment, the fact that funding for anesthesiology departments remains less than 1% of total research funding is an indicator that our specialty is still not achieving its appropriate role in biomedical and clinical research.¹ Funding levels of less than 1% are not appropriate to our representation in the physician commu-



“IARS joins FAER in redoubling our commitment to the academic future of anesthesiology....”

nity³ or to our potential contributions to improved health outcomes.⁴ FAER has stepped up to the plate to meet this challenge. During the past decade, FAER has increased its research funding nearly fivefold and currently provides approximately \$2 million a year in grants to young investigators. Despite this effort, federal research funding for anesthesiology departments has remained nearly constant since 2003, both in total amount and as a percentage of total funding.[‡] In the increasingly competitive research funding environment, the growing efforts of FAER have helped to maintain the position of our specialty, but this is not enough. The ability of our specialty to thrive is critically dependent on the continued generation of new knowledge. The growth, not just the continuation, of FAER is essential to maintaining the pipeline of talented scholars in anesthesiology.

The IARS has also worked hard to support the science of anesthesiology. The IARS is a nonpolitical society founded in 1922 with a mission “to advance and support scientific research and education related to anesthesia and to improve patient care through basic research.” Over the past 20 yr the IARS has funded more than \$10 million in research grants and currently provides approximately \$750,000 per year in research support. Like FAER, IARS funds starter grants for young investigators, emphasizing clinical research through our Clinical Scholar Research Awards. The IARS has also focused on the development of new directions in the specialty through its Frontiers in Anesthesia Research Award, a \$750,000, 3-yr grant for novel and innovative projects. Finally, the IARS has worked hard to leverage its funding to solve important anesthesiology-related problems facing the public. The recent evidence that anesthetics administered to neonatal animals causes neuronal death and cognitive impairment⁵ has spawned concern that anesthetics may be neurotoxic in human infants. The IARS has partnered with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, creating a public-private partnership to raise funds for grants to address this issue in patients. The SmartTots® initiative^{6,7} has just been launched, with contributions from the IARS and philanthropic sources and infrastructure support from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. § SmartTots® will have its first round of grant funding this year.

As with the FAER programs, internal surveys have demonstrated a substantial return on the investment from IARS grant funding, as manifested by the highly successful academic careers

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In conjunction with the FAER 25th anniversary, articles and editorials in the ANESTHESIOLOGY October 2011 issue celebrate the accomplishments of FAER. For additional information visit www.FAER.org.

‡ http://www.brimr.org/NIH_Awards/NIH_Awards.htm. Accessed June 23, 2011.

§ www.SmartTots.org. Accessed June 23, 2011.

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of former grantees and their subsequent grant funding from government and foundation sources. The mission of IARS is international and its grants are available to members worldwide. The effect of IARS grant programs has been spread across many nations, particularly in Europe and North America. This international mission complements FAER's focus on anesthesiology research in the United States.

It is clear that funding for anesthesiology research will continue to be a scarce resource. FAER deserves tremendous credit for advancing the careers of many anesthesiology physician-scientists and for improving the academic standing of our specialty. The IARS joins FAER in redoubling our commitment to the academic future of anesthesiology in the United States and worldwide. Happy Birthday FAER, and thank you!

Alex S. Evers, M.D.* Hugo Van Aken, M.D.† *Department of Anesthesiology, Washington University School of Medicine, Saint Louis, Missouri. eversa@wustl.edu. †Klinik und Poliklinik für Anästhesiologie und Operative Intensivmedizin des UKM, Münster, Germany.

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