State Affiliate News

State Oncology Societies Booth

The State Oncology Societies booth at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting increases the visibility of ASCO affiliates and offers a unique opportunity for education, marketing, networking, and membership recruitment. Physician volunteers and staff from participating societies are able to interact with current and prospective members, as well as with representatives from patient advocacy groups and industry. Concurrently, ASCO staff has a chance to present the benefits of the State/Regional Affiliate Program, which include the State Affiliate Grant Program; practice and reimbursement assistance; legislative, regulatory, and media activities; meetings and education services; and Web site development.

The well-appointed booth highlights ASCO's position as the world's leading organization representing professionals who treat people with cancer, and the value of involvement in oncology-related issues at the state and regional level. "Active, well-organized societies provide an early warning system for emerging oncology trends, a fair and balanced voice for community and academic oncologists, and a mechanism for prompt feedback on new policies affecting cancer care and research," says Peter Paul Yu, MD, immediate past chair of the Clinical Practice Committee. "Affiliates also enhance ASCO's advocacy efforts and provide a pool of future ASCO leaders."

The majority of the 22 societies who were represented at the first booth in 2004 have continued to participate annually. Policy changes over the years have made Booth participation more user-friendly. For example, originally, at least one representative from each participating society had to staff the booth during all exhibit hall hours. More recently, the elimination of assigned time slots frees up time for representatives to network while ASCO staff covers the booth.

The booth is just one of many ASCO initiatives that encourage involvement on a local and regional level. "Participation in the booth is an important way to address challenges, exchange ideas, and ensure that patients have access to quality care," says Marci Cali, executive director of the Texas Society of Medical Oncology (TSMO) and 13 other ASCO affiliates. "One year, for example, because there were enough TSMO board members present, we were able to hold a productive and successful meeting on site."

Although physicians attend the Annual Meeting primarily for the science, Cali says they make time to visit the Booth to

support their affiliate's position as the voice of oncology at the community level.

The Booth also plays a significant role in helping state and regional societies develop business plans for the upcoming year. "Attracting personnel from organizations that support societies helps to build and strengthen relationships with decision makers," says Cali. "Leaders of state and regional societies depend on this to shore up their budgets so they may accomplish their goals."

The potential for enhanced industry support is also a deciding factor for recurring participation by the Medical Oncology Association of Southern California (MOASC). "You never know who you may meet or what you may learn at the ASCO Annual Meeting," says Mariana S.-B. Lamb, MS, executive director of MOASC. "The booth enhances those opportunities."

MOASC members consider the booth their home base within the larger meeting. "The booth provides unlimited networking opportunities among our members and those of other state societies," says Lamb. "Our presence also allows us to advertise our meetings and showcase our projects to the oncology community at-large."

As an active member of ASCO's State/Regional Affiliate Program, the Michigan Society of Hematology & Oncology (MSHO) appreciates the significance of representation at the booth. Mary Malloy, CAE, executive director of MSHO, facilitates networking for its members by providing MSHO pins for their ASCO badges.

Representation at the booth shows that a state or regional society is dynamic and well-connected, in addition to offering the potential for increased corporate support. "It's definitely a plus to have established personal contact with a company's decision makers at the Meeting," says Malloy. "However, time spent sharing the past year's best initiatives and lessons learned with directors of other state societies is truly invaluable."

Booth representation challenges societies to make the most of the opportunity ASCO provides. An invitation to participate in the booth at the 2008 Meeting was mailed to each state and regional society in November.

For more information about the State Oncology Societies booth, visit www.asco.org, or contact stateaffiliates@asco.org.

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