

Bill Branch, MD
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Thanks to the efforts of many, especially Dave Hatem and Bill Clark, who were Presidents before me, the Academy has many accomplishments and is solidly poised to further its mission as we enter 2007. Our membership is growing and now exceeds 400. Bronwyn Wilson, our new VP for Membership, will lead the effort to keep our membership growing. Our Winter Course, directed by Calvin Chou in beautiful Asilomar near Monterey, CA was a wonderful experience for all, as it has been for many years. The Winter Course clearly solidifies the Academy's leadership and FIT's around its core mission. Our Research and Teaching Forum in Atlanta was the largest ever in terms of attendance, a sign of the Academy's increasingly healthy prominence as the place for researchers to present their work related to communication and relationship-centered care. The ICCH Forum planned for Charleston in October, co-sponsored with EACH and Northwestern's Center for Communication and Medicine promises to be even more exciting and to continue to further our role in science and academics. Thanks to profits of the past two Forums and Summer Courses, the Academy's budget shows a surplus. We are on sound financial footing at this time.

As we hope to reach out to those interested in communication with patients, we should be seeking new venues for our work that allow us to relate to a larger group of teachers and care-givers including those outside of medicine. Maysel White, VP for Education, is working with planning groups for the next Summer Course in East Lansing Michigan and representatives of Mayo, ACP and other organizations as we seek to shape our courses to appeal to larger audiences who may have less than the traditional 5 days to spend. I believe it is most important that we offer a variety of venues that will attract individuals who can contribute and participate in AACH at various levels. Peter Weissmann, VP for Communication, and others will reach out to organizations like ABIM with whom we may share synergies. Dave Hatem has volunteered to help reach out to patient organizations, a long-standing goal of AACH. Dennis Novack, Bill Clark, Ron Saizow and others have created an amazing product in doc.com, now used to teach communication skills in some of the most prestigious medical schools. Finally, Bill Clark has spearheaded the effort to raise, so far, over \$110,000 for the Putnam Scholars in memory of our dear friend, Sam Putnam.

I believe we have solid foundations to move ahead on several fronts. The Forum and our other academic activities should continue to grow. We should add members from all disciplines. If we succeed in developing new shorter courses that appeal to institutions, our traditional programs, the Summer Course and FIT Program, will benefit as talented individuals are attracted to, join, and become actively engaged in AACH.

With all best wishes, Bill Branch, President, AACH