Alexander A. Hannenberg, M.D., Named 2015 ASA Distinguished Service Award Recipient

John M. Zerwas, M.D.

Alexander Austin Hannenberg, M.D., will receive the ASA Distinguished Service Award (DSA) at the ANESTHESIOLOGY® 2016 annual meeting in Chicago this October. The DSA is the highest award conferred by our society for exceptional service and achievement. First established in 1945, the DSA recognizes the unique contributions by the recipient to the advancement of the specialty and to ASA that have helped transform our practice. A list of all prior DSA recipients may be found on the ASA website at https://www.asahq.org/sitecore/content/ASAHQ/about-asa/asa-awards-and-programs/distinguished-service-award.

Dr. Hannenberg with Dr. Kelly McQueen (rear, left) with staff at the Hôpital de l'Université d'État, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, after the earthquake in 2010.

John M. Zerwas, M.D., is an anesthesiologist with U.S. Anesthesia Partners, Houston. He was ASA President in 2013.
Dr. Hannenberg received his undergraduate degree from Vassar College in New York in 1975 and his medical degree from Tufts University in Boston in 1979. After completing an internship at St. Elizabeth's Hospital of Boston, Alex went on to complete his training in anesthesiology at Beth Israel Hospital/Harvard Medical School 1981-83. Also noteworthy is his completion of the Hospital Leadership Development Program at Harvard Business School in 2009. He became a diplomate of the American Board of Anesthesiology in 1984, and chose to recertify in 1997 and 2006. Upon completion of his formal training, Dr. Hannenberg stayed in the Boston area and has maintained much of his clinical activity at the Newton-Wellesley Hospital in Newton, Massachusetts. In addition, he has served as a clinical professor in the department of anesthesiology at Tufts University School of Medicine.

Alex has a continuous and exceptional record of service to ASA. Early in his career, he developed an interest and expertise in the economics of anesthesia practice. He served on the ASA Committee on Economics from 1994-2003, and was the chair from 2001-03. In 2004, ASA established a new elected office, Vice President for Professional Affairs, which Dr. Hannenberg served from 2004-08. After being elected to the office of First Vice President and President-Elect in 2008 and 2009, Alex became ASA President in 2010. During his tenure, he began the process of evaluating ASA physical plant needs, which ultimately led to the construction of the new state-of-the-art headquarters in Schaumburg, Illinois. Perhaps most notable was his vision to create the Anesthesia Quality Institute (AQI) and the National Anesthesia Clinical Outcomes Registry (NACOR), considered by many to be the benchmark for clinical registries of all medical disciplines. He was also instrumental in recruiting Richard Dutton, M.D., as the first AQI Executive Director, and he continues to serve on the AQI Board of Directors.

Driven by the devastating Haiti earthquake in 2010, “Global Health Outreach” became a passion of Dr. Hannenberg. During this time, he worked to develop a coordinated response for medical aid to the people of Haiti. He was instrumental in the creation of Lifebox USA, which focuses on improving anesthesia safety in low-income countries through the provision of pulse oximeters and education on the use of the Safe Surgery Checklist. To further support global humanitarian outreach, Alex proposed and established the ASA Charitable Foundation in 2011. As the newest of the ASA Foundations, it seeks donations for various activities, including the Lifebox project and other international outreach efforts.

As a member of the board of the Foundation for Anesthesia Education and Research (FAER), Dr. Hannenberg recognized the need to create interest in anesthesiology research among medical students. Through his efforts and that of the FAER staff, the Medical Student Research Fellowship was established. From 2003-09 Alex served as chair of the FAER committee responsible for oversight of the program. Since inception of the program in 2003, more than 300 students have participated in 30 major anesthesiology laboratories.

Throughout his leadership journey, Dr. Hannenberg has been supported enormously by his family. His wife Carol, also a physician and general surgeon, was always at his side and very engaged in all the activities of ASA.

The DSA will be presented at the time of the Emery A. Rovenstine Memorial Lecture on Monday, October 24, 8 a.m.-9:15 a.m. Please join us at that time as ASA recognizes Dr. Hannenberg for his meritorious achievements and contributions to our specialty.