

My First CRA ASM Experience as CEO

By Ahmad M. Zbib, MD, CPHIMS-CA

When I joined the CRA earlier this year, prep for the Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) had kicked into high gear and the CRA team (staff, committee members and contractors) were working around the clock aiming to be the ultimate hosts. Fast forward to February 19, and the minute my plane touched down in Vancouver my “host anxiety” was peaking—it felt like the first time you host your soon-to-be in-laws to announce your engagement and you hope you leave a lasting and favorable impression.

While the 2018 ASM in Vancouver was not my first CRA ASM, my role was significantly different this time around, as you may imagine. That said, it was everything I imagined and then some. The team going through their checklists like the pros they are, members and other participants expressing their amazement at how beautiful the venue was and how friendly the hotel’s staff were; and the smile on my face was getting bigger as the energy was building in the main exhibit area.

The striking and prevailing feeling for me is how tight and welcoming the rheumatology community is. Members and other stakeholders from patient/disease organizations, allied healthcare professional groups and industry sponsors were reaching out, introducing themselves and complimenting the great work that the team had done in putting this event together.

The other thing that was quite striking was a dichotomous feeling of pride and humility. It dawned on me that I am now leading an organization of internationally renowned experts, whose discoveries informed the science behind the textbooks I used in school. This group is, first and foremost, inspired by their patients to unlock disease pathways aiming for a cure. That humanity-loving aspect of medicine is what drew me to it. It was refreshing to hear many of the speakers reference their first patient who inspired them to get into rheumatology.



Ahmad Zbib attended his first CRA Annual Scientific Meeting in February as CEO of the CRA.

It is not all science though, just like with any family, and serious matters are part of but not the whole discussion. This group knows how to have fun. From the Great Debate to the awesome moves on the dance floor, having fun and enjoying what you do is part of the DNA of the CRA and its members. Did I also mention the fashion sense?

In closing, I want to thank the CRA family for their warm welcome. For those who attended the ASM but have not connected with me, please send me an email at azbib@rheum.ca. As for those who didn’t have a chance to join us in Vancouver, I look forward to meeting you in Montreal at the 2019 ASM taking place February 27-March 2 at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel. Just remember to grab your most fashionable outfit (and a pair of shoes to rock the dance floor) for our gala.

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