Though economic challenges, emerging opportunities and growing legislative momentum—all amid a constantly changing health care landscape—were the backdrops for the 2009 NHIA Annual Conference & Exposition, held in Baltimore March 1-5.

“We find ourselves once again at a time of both risk and opportunity,” observed outgoing NHIA Board Chair, Chris Maksym, Pharm.D., at the association’s Opening General Session, sponsored by Hospira Worldwide. “NHIA members are faced with increasing economic challenges, staffing shortages, and Medicare reimbursement coverage difficulties that grow greater with the aging of our nation’s population—all while, at the same time, there are solid advancements in care, a deep pipeline of infusible drugs, an expanding marketplace, and perhaps our best chance yet at achieving productive legislative outcomes.”

“Now, more than ever, alternate-site infusion stakeholders must join together to collaborate around our commitment to quality, while harnessing our professional passions,” Maksym declared. “Yes, together we must plan for a thriving future for our field! And that’s why this year’s conference theme, Charting Our Course For Success is so appropriate!”

“This 2009 Annual Conference brings more opportunity for learning than ever before,” exclaimed Melissa Leone, R.N., B.S.N., Chair of NHIA’s Education Committee, which works throughout the year to plan conference content. “With two in-depth pre-conference seminars, more than 35 concurrent educational options, six symposia, three general sessions and—for the first time ever—a roundtable program that offers CE, we’ve assembled a total of 29.5 possible hours of pharmacy and nursing continuing education,” she reported. “And the Legislative Hill Day program that follows is sure to be priceless!” See p. 23 for a complete overview of this historic event (which was sponsored by Innovativ, LLC and Roche).

In addition to the content-rich educational offerings, the 2009 Annual Conference & Exposition also included a variety of opportunities for professional collaboration, including the all-new Fellowship & Networking Event, sponsored by Managed Health Care Associates (MHA), which was held at the National Aquarium in Baltimore, and the state-of-the-art Exposition of products and services available to the industry. “There really is an abundance of meaningful fellowship opportunities here in Baltimore to network with friends and colleagues,” added NHIA’s Vice President of Clinical Affairs Nancy Kramer, R.N., B.S.N., CRNI®, who works closely with the Education Committee planning the conference content. “As we all work together to advance our field,” Kramer encouraged, “please be sure to collaborate and partner with fellow professionals, both within and outside your immediate organization.”

“A time of risk, a time of opportunity—now, more than ever, new and experienced industry stakeholders alike must collaborate to advance the care and delivery of infusion services across the full spectrum of home-based patients,” Leone continued. “Learn together over the next four days—and then be sure to return home ready and eager to share all you have learned in Baltimore with those back at your organization. Working together in this manner will help to ensure we do indeed chart our course for success!”

Guided by Quality, Driven by Passion, NHIA Celebrates 2009 Annual Conference & Exposition

By Steve Jurich and Jeannie Counce
Where We’ve Been—Taking Stock In Our Accomplishments

Throughout the four-day event, various NHIA leaders addressed the membership, sharing a broad overview of the association’s journey to date—and the new directions we are heading in. “To plan a course ahead for success, you do need to reflect upon where you are and where you’ve been,” observed Maksym as he prepared to step down from the NHIA Chairmanship, a role he has held since 2003 (see p. 6 for a full update on the 2009 - 2010 NHIA Board of Directors).

“Guided by quality and driven by passion, we have positioned NHIA and its members well for attaining long-term industry success,” he asserted. Reflecting on his tenure, Maksym noted that he was “honored to serve NHIA during a transformative time.”

“With [NHIA President] Russ Bodoff’s determination and drive, we have translated the needs of our association, the vision of the Board of Directors, and the interests of our industry partners into an effective action plan to correct our financial condition and strategically position NHIA for success,” Maksym said. He then outlined four significant milestones that distinguish the successful changes taking place at NHIA over the two years since Bodoff took office:

+ Transformation from a professional society with an individual-based membership to a true trade association with a company-based membership structure.
+ Realignment and expansion of the Board of Directors (from nine to 12 members) to better reflect the entire spectrum of alternate-site infusion therapy providers—small, medium, and large; independently owned, regional, and national; and health system-based.
+ Rejuvenated relationships and expanded collaboration with manufacturer, supplier, and supply chain partners—especially through the Future of Infusion Advisory Council (FIAC). See p. 32 for more on this group and how it is helping NHIA chart a strategic course for the future.
+ Revitalized legislative advocacy activities, marked by the largest Legislative Hill Day in NHIA history.

“Serving on the Board has been an experience I’ll treasure for a long time and remember for a lifetime,” Maksym concluded. “I want thank the Board and NHIA staff, both past and present, and all of my NHIA friends for affording me the opportunity and honor of being Chairman of the NHIA Board of Directors. I also want to thank my University of Michigan colleagues and my wife, Mary Jo, for all your support and encouragement during my leadership commitment to NHIA.”

Where We Are Today—The State Of The Association’s Transformation

Assuring the membership that NHIA is positioned for even greater success moving forward, Maksym turned the podium over to NHIA President Russ Bodoff, who elaborated on the state of the association through its ongoing transformation. “It has been a great honor to lead NHIA the past two years,” said Bodoff.

“Over the course of the last 12 months in particular, we continue to see significant changes taking place in the alternate-site infusion field—and a great deal of transition at NHIA,” he continued. “And through all the challenges and opportunities, it has been a very positive, exciting, and rewarding year for both me and NHIA!”

Bodoff began by thanking the membership for their help in identifying patients willing to share how they have suffered as a result of the lack of Medicare coverage for home infusion. “I well know that these stories are hard to come by, since these patients are not individuals you generally treat. But we desperately needed these human interest stories that could be used in meetings on Capitol Hill—and with the media,” he said of the inherent challenges in collecting Medicare patient stories.

Chris Maksym, Pharm.D., concludes his term as NHIA’s Chairman of the Board, telling members that he was “honored to serve NHIA during a transformative time.”
I am now pleased to be able to say the spigot has opened wide and patient stories are flowing into our office in significant numbers! So let me thank you for coming through when we needed it most," he said. At the time of the Annual Conference, NHIA had documented 11 comprehensive patient stories for use on Hill day, with several dozen now being processed. "I have to believe that these personal stories reflecting the many problems and challenges that patients dealt with due to the lack of Medicare reimbursement for their home infusion treatments will impact members of Congress," Bodoff remarked. To learn more about the role patient stories play in NHIA's advocacy work, see the Hill Day article on p.23.

Citing NHIA's responsibilities as the trade association for the entire alternate-site infusion field (see the box on p. 18 for more), Bodoff provided an update on the state of the association, and some of the major steps taken over the past year. "With your help, the membership transition has been a huge success, thus far," he said. "The shift from individual to company-based membership allows NHIA to strengthen its ability to serve its members and advance the field—while allowing every employee of a member organization to receive membership benefits."

The association has made tremendous progress with its legislative activities, according to Bodoff. "Every NHIA member should be excited and proud that our legislation in both the Senate and the House were reintroduced during the first two weeks of the new Congress. The seeds of our legislative plan are taking root, enabling us to start building momentum early."

In addition, after being told that no national publication would be interested in our story, Bodoff reminded the audience that the largest national daily newspaper, The Wall Street Journal, covered the Medicare home infusion coverage gap. "That one critical consumer press article continues to fuel our ability to open doors on Capitol Hill. We don't plan to stop there," he added reassuringly. "With your help and the incredible patient stories I talked about earlier, we will continue to reach out for press coverage at the national and local levels."

Bodoff noted that NHIA has continued to nurture a strong and positive working relationship between the NHIA Board, staff, and members of the FIAC. "Since the 2008

NHIA’s Responsibilities to its Members

As the trade association for the entire alternate-site infusion field, NHIA’s responsibilities remain clear:

+ **Quality Patient Care.** "We must work to ensure that patient care meets the highest quality standards possible," said NHIA President Russ Bodoff, "while constantly fostering innovation and creative passion in all that our members do."

+ **Ethical Practices.** "Our ethical practices must be second to none," he added.

+ **Involve all Stakeholders.** "NHIA must make certain that all key stakeholder groups in the field are fully engaged in collaborative exchanges."

+ **Create a Level Playing Field.** "We must affirm that a level playing field exists for all providers—be they small, medium, or large," insisted Bodoff.

+ **Advocate with a Unified Voice.** "NHIA has got to assure that the unified voice of the NHIA membership—and the often under-represented voice of the patients we serve—is effectively heard on Capitol Hill," Bodoff asserted. "With so many associations and industry groups pushing issues on the Hill—many of them much larger and better financed than ours—we need to be focused, creative, imaginative, and daring in how we drive our messages."

+ **Speak Frankly and Constructively.** "NHIA's responsibility to you as valued members, in fact my highest responsibility to you all as your chief staff executive, is to speak honestly and with a constructive frankness about where we are and where we are going," concluded Bodoff. "That is a pledge you can count on from me and my team!"
Annual Conference, we have met three times with this group of valued partners to help craft NHIA’s strategic plan and productively chart our course for success,” he said.

Moving ahead, the association plans to add many additional member services to its existing list. “In late 2008, we debuted a new audio program, entitled Talk Infusion,” explained Bodoff. “This service will offer quarterly audio conferences at no charge to members, covering some of the hottest topics in alternate-site infusion to help you be more successful in the services you provide.” The number of participants in the first Talk Infusion forum exceeded expectations—and the second call that just took place in April 2009 was highly attended and valued, as well.

Another value-added member benefit, CE INFUSION, was launched at the conference with the March/April 2009 issue of INFUSION. “We will have an article offering free pharmacy and nursing CE to NHIA members in every issue of INFUSION moving forward,” announced Bodoff. “This is another way that NHIA is looking to enhance the quality of your skills and the services you provide, while helping with professional licensure requirements.”

“Through all the changes and opportunities since coming aboard, NHIA has remained an exciting and positive experience,” he reflected. “Our association is moving in a sound strategic direction,” Bodoff concluded. “Guided by quality and driven by passion, we are charting our course for success.”

NHIA’s new Board Chair, Lynn Giglione, R.N., B.S.N., articulates the association’s strategic destination to members. “It’s your support and involvement that makes NHIA the collaborative, successful leadership organization for our field,” she exclaims.

Charting Our Course For The Future—Articulating The Destination

Alternate-site infusion therapy is perfectly positioned to take a leading role in the future vision of health care—and NHIA is charting a strategic course that will allow the association and the field to take advantage of our industry’s dynamic opportunities, according to NHIA’s new Chair Lynn Giglione, R.N., B.S.N. Giglione, NHIA’s first female Chair, and the first nurse to lead the organization, shared her vision for the association’s preferred destination. See the box on p. 20 for more on Giglione.

“We have reached the beginning of a new era in alternate-site infusion,” said Giglione. “NHIA is now a trade organization and our mission and strategic goals must reflect the changing needs of our industry. Remembering our roots, we now must strive for the highest degree of quality in all areas of our business, while harnessing our patient-centered passions—simply stated, we now must chart our collaborative course for alternate-site infusion success!”

The first step is to create a new reality, where every older and disabled American who requires home infusion can obtain it via a meaningful Medicare home infusion benefit,” she said. “That realistic destination—more within our grasp than ever before—is called, ‘the passage of S.254 and H.R. 574 within the 111th Congress.’” See p.29 for more details about NHIA’ current legislative efforts, and see p.23 for the outcomes of the 2009 NHIA Legislative Hill Day.

“We need to always be mindful of the business realities we find ourselves in, as well as the altruistic passions we possess for our patients—and, when properly balanced, these two core elements of our field are not mutually exclusive,” Giglione asserted. “For example, passage of our Medicare legislation will positively impact our business—but it will also very much enhance the clinical outcomes and the quality of life for our patients too.”

Because of the critical nature of NHIA’s advocacy agenda at this point in time, “A high degree of focus is being placed on our legislative activities,” observed Giglione. “However, there are indeed many other important initiatives underway and being planned,” she continued. “As we complete a very crucial strategic planning process, we are crafting additional, diverse approaches for driving your future success, for fostering the growth of the field, and for ensuring the highest levels of quality care for the patients that we serve everyday.”

Looking to the future, NHIA is envisioning an expanded array of educational services that build off the annual con-
Companies on the FIAC have done a great deal of work in all areas I’ve discussed—and that is a reality we should actively demonstrate to our patients, the public, the media, and to our members of Congress.”

NHIA also plans to build the profession—and help address staffing shortages more proactively—through fortified relationships with pharmacy and nursing schools. “In the last two years, we have greatly strengthened our reciprocal relationships with many key stakeholders in this field,” reported Giglione. “Now is the time to further broaden that circle of reciprocity by strategically engaging academia to expand the knowledge and interest in the home infusion field among students.”

Recognizing the many, complex challenges related to industry-wide data collection, Giglione asserted that NHIA plans to lead the charge to create a mechanism for the collection of standardized data (see p.32 for more details about this emerging data initiative). “Perhaps the most daunting task facing us in the immediate future is the lack of standardized data and core measurements for many aspects of our business—clinical, operational, and reimbursement,” she acknowledged.

“Such data enables us all to better understand the field—and allows us to benchmark ourselves against our peers. In addition, it will be useful for our critical business partners who want to better understand our needs and will prove exceptionally valuable when we finally have a meaningful HIT Medicare benefit,” explained Giglione. “To be sure, this is a multi-year effort, but now is the time to begin forging ahead with this critical endeavor.”

“Your Board of Directors and the eight leadership companies on the FIAC have done a great deal of work in all the areas I’ve discussed—and there are additional ideas we are still assessing, as well,” she concluded. “It’s your support and involvement that makes NHIA the collaborative, successful leadership organization for our field. Our partnerships, our fellowship, and the deep passion we share in our drive for advancing quality in our industry are what ensure our success.”

“These elements make certain that our destinations will be correct,” she added. “And they add to my joy and the honor I feel being elected as your Board Chair.”

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