

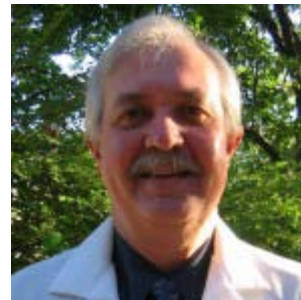
## Message from the President:

*Alan Woolf, MD, MPH, FAACT, FACMT*

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### ***Stand Up & Be Counted! Advocacy in AACT***

One of the most gratifying aspects (and there are many) of being President of AACT is having the ability to push forward ideas and programs in clinical toxicology that you care about. The Academy is a respected voice of clinical toxicology and we can make ourselves heard when we stand together and take a position! Webster's Dictionary defines an 'advocate' as 'one that pleads the cause of another' or 'one that defends or maintains a cause or proposal'. The ubiquitous Wikipedia defines 'advocacy' as "a political process by an individual or group which normally aims to influence public-policy and resource allocation decisions...it may be motivated from moral, ethical or faith principles or simply to protect an asset of interest." I would claim that the Academy has an ongoing and important role in advocacy: it defends its own causes and it pleads the case of others ('assets of interest' are, for example, poison control centers). Let me give you a few recent examples.



Over this past year our members have created and/or endorsed a number of influential public position statements on a range of topics:

- World Health Organization – AACT endorsed the adding of dimercapto succinic acid (DMSA) to the WHO list of essential medicines.
- Public Employees – AACT joined the Society of Toxicology (SOT) in advocating for fair treatment for governmental employees who are members of non-profit societies, allowing them to hold office and participate fully in the activities of professional societies.
- Crotalidae Snake Bite First Aid – AACT joined AAPCC, ACMT, APAMT, EAPCCT, and others in endorsing a statement opposing pressure immobilization as a first aid measure in the treatment of rattlesnake bites.

You can read about the details of the snake envenomation first aid position statement elsewhere in this issue of AACTion as well as at the AACT's "Position Statements" section of the website at [www.clintox.org](http://www.clintox.org). These endorsements advance the field of clinical toxicology and perform a public service.

This year the AACT also joined the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) in taking an important stand in advocating for poison control centers in the United States (see the commentary in *Clinical Toxicology* 2011; 49: 284-286). The functionality of the nation's integrated poison control system is under financial attack by cutbacks in Federal funding, even while the government looks to its 24-hour

daily poison control services as a critical first-line resource for insuring the nation's emergency preparedness. The AACT's advocacy efforts for poison control centers have not achieved all that we might have hoped for yet; severe financial constraints remain among the daily operational challenges testing most, if not all, poison control centers. But we remain committed to the long-term objective. Working together with our colleagues in AAPCC, we must convince our public officials going forward that supporting poison control is the fiscally sound, ethically and morally right thing to do.

I hope these examples showcase for you the role that the Academy can, and in my opinion, must take in protecting and advancing the public and professional interests of our members, colleagues working in toxicology world-wide, and the general public. I also hope that you will consider how you, as an AACT member, can advocate for the Academy and for our profession. "Think globally, act locally" as the adage says. We welcome and solicit ideas and direction from our membership. The process of a formal policy or position statement often begins at the level of our committees or special interest groups. The Board of Trustees endorses each only after careful deliberation and, often, debate, so that we protect our reputation as an organization holding to the highest standards of science and ethics.

I urge you to stand up and be counted! Be an advocate for clinical toxicology in your professional life and your community. And let the leadership of AACT, its trustees and officers, know how we can more effectively represent you in taking up the cause.