

## EDITORIALS

# Sleep is essential: a new strategic plan for the American Academy of Sleep Medicine

Kelly A. Carden, MD, MBA

Saint Thomas Medical Partners - Sleep Specialists, Nashville, Tennessee

## INTRODUCTION

Established in 1975, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) has helped advance the field of sleep medicine for more than four decades.<sup>1</sup> Due to ongoing shifts in health care delivery, as well as new evidence, methods and innovations impacting the practice of sleep medicine, the AASM must be adaptable.<sup>2-4</sup> As a professional membership society, the AASM must remain relevant amid constantly changing circumstances by providing consistent and lasting value for our members. This requires the leaders of the AASM to frequently assess the organization's priorities and direction to determine if they are still aligned with the needs of our members and the field of sleep medicine. The AASM board of directors embarked on such a process in 2019 by initiating the development of a new strategic plan that will guide AASM activities for the next three to five years.

## PLANNING PROCESS

The AASM contracted with Tecker International, LLC, an independent consulting services firm. To gather essential member feedback that would guide the board of directors through the strategic planning process, a four-step approach was used:

1. A 15-minute, online survey of individual AASM members was conducted from April 17 through May 6, 2019. The AASM invited 7,448 individual members to participate, and 1,093 participants completed the survey, for a completion rate of 15%.
2. A 10-minute online survey of facility members was conducted from May 10 through June 4, 2019. The AASM sent survey invitations to 2,251 facility member representatives (eg, medical directors, facility directors, practice managers, office managers), and 375 participants completed it, for a completion rate of 17%.
3. Nine focus groups were gathered in June 2019 at SLEEP 2019, the 33rd annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies in San Antonio, Texas. The focus groups comprised distinct categories of members: advanced practice providers, sleep dentists, early career professionals, facility managers, international

professionals, past presidents of the AASM, physicians, sleep psychologists, and sleep technologists. The focus groups were led by Paul D. Meyer, principal consultant, president and co-CEO of Tecker, with no participation or attendance by members of the AASM board of directors or staff.

4. Twelve qualitative telephone interviews with stakeholders representing the broad spectrum of the sleep field were conducted.

Tecker compiled all this information into a comprehensive report for the AASM board of directors. Additionally, the AASM Diversity and Inclusion Committee submitted the preliminary findings from its ongoing analysis of demographic data reported by AASM members to the board of directors.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

The AASM board of directors gathered in Chicago from September 14–15, 2019, for a strategic planning session led by Mr. Meyer. This session generated a draft strategic plan, which was reviewed, revised and approved by the board of directors during its quarterly meeting in October 2019. The key components of the strategic plan are presented here.

### Core purpose (mission)

**Advancing sleep care and enhancing sleep health to improve lives**

This brief statement encapsulates the AASM's reason for being, which should transcend any environmental changes that our organization encounters. The AASM exists to advance the care that our members provide for patients who have sleep disorders. The AASM also exists to enhance sleep health—promoting population health and public safety—outside the walls of the sleep clinic and the sleep center. Ultimately, these two purposes combine to serve the greater purpose of improving lives.

### Core values

- Adaptable
- Diverse and Inclusive

- Evidence-based
- Innovative
- Patient-centered
- Visionary

The board of directors identified these values as the essential and enduring principles to guide our organization. If we are to thrive and to serve our members well, then we must uphold these values.

## Vision

### **Sleep is recognized as essential to health**

This statement conveys a concrete yet unrealized future for the AASM, providing a clear and compelling focal point for our efforts. We desire to see the day when people in all spheres of life appreciate the importance of sleep as a pillar of health, recognize that sleep is as important as exercise and nutrition in maintaining health and well-being, and take action to promote healthy sleep. This statement will be a catalyst, challenging us to implement strategies that will move us closer to the achievement of this vision.

## Goals

The board of directors identified four key areas most deserving of strategic focus and delineated four corresponding strategic goals. In addition to advancing the AASM mission and vision, these goals will help the AASM implement strategies to address some of the most pressing issues impacting our members.

### **Public awareness: promote greater public recognition that sleep is essential to health**

Achieving the AASM vision will require a concerted effort to raise public awareness of the importance of sleep. While this will involve widespread public relations and public health promotion efforts, it also will include strategies to improve awareness among key target audiences, including other medical societies, policymakers, and students.

### **Technology innovation: positively influence the impact of technology on patients and the sleep team**

The rise of consumer sleep technology has had a significant impact on the sleep field in recent years, and we are certain to see new diagnostic and therapeutic technologies in the years ahead.<sup>4,5</sup> Rather than waiting passively for these innovations to arrive, the AASM can play a proactive role by engaging key technology influencers at the initial stages of development. This involvement can help improve the clinical utility of sleep devices while enabling the AASM to better equip our members for their implementation.

### **Workforce development: expand the sleep team workforce of the future to improve access to high-quality sleep care**

The AASM will continue to develop innovative strategies to increase the number of physicians who complete a fellowship training program in sleep medicine. At the same time, we will help strengthen the workforce of the sleep team, including advanced practice providers, sleep psychologists, and sleep

technologists. We also will continue to work with other care partners to develop models for collaborative sleep care.

### **Advocacy to improve patient care: positively influence clinical practice for providers and their patients**

The top work-related areas of concern identified by the AASM individual and facility member surveys were financial, insurance, and patient care issues such as prior authorization, inconsistent insurance policies, declining reimbursement, and fragmentation of care. The AASM will seek to increase its influence on payers and government decision-makers to decrease administrative burdens for our members and enhance recognition of the value of the services that they provide.

## CONCLUSIONS

The AASM board of directors will be working with our staff in the national office to develop the implementation plan for our strategic goals. None of these goals would be achievable without our engaged members and committed volunteers. We are thankful for this support, and we look forward to working together to advance sleep care and enhance sleep health to improve lives.

## CITATION

Carden KA. Sleep is essential: a new strategic plan for the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2020;16(1):1–2.

## REFERENCES

1. Shepard JW, Buysse DJ, Chesson AL, et al. History of the development of sleep medicine in the United States. *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2005;1(1):61–82.
2. Watson NF, Rosen IM, Chervin RD; Board of Directors of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. The past is prologue: the future of sleep medicine. *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2017;13(1):127–135.
3. Rosen IM. Change is the only constant in life (and in sleep medicine). *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2018;14(6):1025–1030.
4. Kirsch DB. Disruption in health care (and sleep medicine): "it's the end of the world as we know it...and I feel fine." *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2019;15(9):1185–1188.
5. Khosla S, Deak MC, Gault D, et al. Consumer sleep technology: an American Academy of Sleep Medicine position statement. *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2018;14(5):877–880.

## SUBMISSION & CORRESPONDENCE INFORMATION

Submitted for publication November 22, 2019

Submitted in final revised form November 22, 2019

Accepted for publication November 22, 2019

Address correspondence to: Kelly A. Carden, MD, MBA, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, 2510 N. Frontage Road, Darien, IL 60561; Tel: (630) 737-9700; Fax: (630) 737-9790; Email: kcarden@aasm.org

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Kelly A. Carden, MD, MBA, is the 2019–2020 president of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM).