

# The Oslerian

## A Message from the President Burnout

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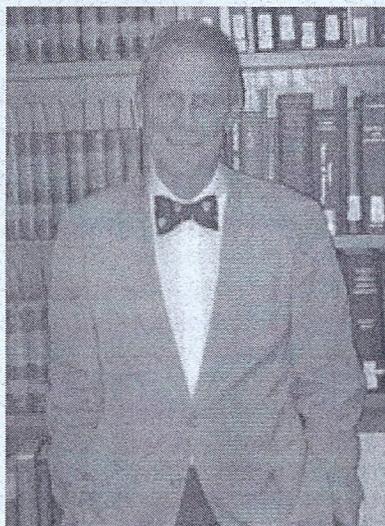
### Greetings, fellow Oslerians!

Yes, you may write burnout as one word or as two. I naturally prefer the former as the Germans do, notorious for creating word monsters that barely fit on one line, such as *Donau-dampfschiffahrtsgesellschaftskapitaen* and if so desired you may jut add his daughter seamlessly to the old man's title since this captain of the Danube Steamship Society was married, so the rumor has it. But if you like *burn out* as two words, that's just fine with my Webster's New Third International Dictionary, a gift from my friend and fellow Oslerian, Howard Burchell, together with an old fashioned wonderful stand. Rarely a day goes by without looking up some word and meaning. So, under *burn out* we find: to destroy or obliterate by fire or heat. Yes, that's the literal, old meaning and I find it fitting since it has the destruction, the flames and the scorch in it. Farther down we read under *burnout*: the moment at which a jet or rocket motor exhausts its fuel. Not bad at all for my purposes. Somewhere in between I read: to cause to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources (he will *burn* himself

*out* unless he gets more sleep) — wish it were that simple! And one more of Webster's illustrative examples, always bracketed: (the best soil *burns out* under constant cropping). Did Noah and his helpers anticipate what I wanted to talk to you about? All of the above definitions are splendid examples and interpretations of today's topic, burnout. It is neither a disease, nor an inevitable natural phenomenon, it is unpredictable, but is treatable and hopefully even preventable. Might an early immunization grant lifelong immunity? I hope so.

The problem is not new, but I do not know how old it really is. Martin Luther (1483-1546) probably burned the midnight oil but did he ever burn out? I doubt it since our forefathers (and mothers!) had a lifestyle that while stressed still seemed less exhausting. Well, *stress*, when did that appear in modern life? Does it have anything to do with burnout? Hans Selye (1907-1982) introduced *stress* as a clinical phenomenon and saw it as a harmful entity leading to the *adaptation syndrome*. However, nowadays we might consider a healthy dose of stress desirable and many of us probably do our best work

while stressed. And so it seems to me: it's good to burn, but not to burn out. While accessible with the *Maslach Burnout Inventory*, an all-encompassing definition has yet to be agreed upon, but we all know what it would include: the fun is gone, the feet are dragged, the soul suffers. Well, some consider burnout as the loss of the soul of medicine. Work becomes just that, work and nothing but work and too little satisfaction. Tempers flair and cynicism replaces wit and instead of good natured humor we display biting irony, even sarcasm. Not only do we suffer but our family and friends and patients, they all share in our misery, often without realizing it. Good, if we have a safety net something akin to peer review that catches us and keeps us till we sense it: something's got to be done. Yes, there are plenty of plans, more sleep (see above), less work, a sabbatical, psychotherapy, vacation, and so on. What's best? So I'll propose an ounce of prevention, against a pound of cure, admitting that we don't know who will need this. Osler clearly saw this problem when he addressed his students (1905): "To each one of you the practice of medicine will be very



Claus A. Pierach

## Burnout (continued from page 1)

much as you make it—to one a worry, a care, a perpetual annoyance; to another, a daily joy and a life of as much happiness and usefulness as can well fall to the lot of man.” Yet he himself showed signs of burnout and was about to leave Johns Hopkins for Oxford, a story so well described by Bruce Fye and subtitled *The Price of Success* (*New Engl J Med* 1989; 320: 1425-1431).

We better start early since three quarters of our young residents show signs of burnout. If that happens on green wood how much *joie de vivre* will remain for the rest of their lives? Has it something to do with our selection process for a career in medicine? Yes, we pick those who have already shown that they can burn the candle at both ends, often enough with blinders and only focused narrowly on becoming a doctor. Talk to medical school applicants about the arts, about politics, about leisure—too often I draw a blank stare. Once a medical student, work and chores and tasks seem to overwhelm them, demanding perfection. Jock Murray saw this as a pressure to succeed at everything, leading to the three sad syllables “I’ve had it,” an apt description of burnout. His school (Dalhousie) did something about it and started an informal program approximately 20 years ago, at first just for students and residents, later involving also the faculty and perhaps best summarized in the goal of restoring balance, achieved primarily through self-care and helping each other.

I have seen involvement in a secondary devotion as helpful

prevention for burnout. No, not as primary purpose but complimentary like the work of the two ventricles of our heart: both move the same volume but with vastly different intensity (pressures), yet with similar purpose, to keep us alive. If one ventricle doesn’t work well, heart failure results—another synonym for burnout? This second avocation better come natural. I rarely go to the movies, maybe once every other year. But I like Woody Allen who once quoted a friend about a difficult marriage: “I know we’re going to have to work at it.” And Allen continues: “I always think they’re wrong. The things that are really pleasurable in life, whether it’s playing softball or working on your stamp collection, really require no effort.” How right Allen is! We have to find the balance and something that is fun, pure and simple. Among my former students, now internist friends, are three stellar examples: Laurel, who is a composer and sings in the *Minnesota Chorale*, a competitive choir; Craig, who writes and publishes poetry; and Paul, who still plays hockey so hard that he might become edentulous. All three love to teach, not only by example. I fear for none of them that they might burn out.

Elevate a hobby to something more serious. Go from an occasional run to mastering a marathon. Take your sketch book along and follow Plinius’ admonition *nulla dies sine linea!* (like Sean Murphy). Tackle the job of building furniture (Like Charley Bryan). Grow orchids or dwarf fruit trees (like Billy Andrews).

In regards to my fellow Oslerians: I hope I preached to the choir.

Claus A. Pierach  
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## Oslerian Progress Notes

**Clyde Partin** writes to ask our membership if they can be of help to him in either or both of two areas:

1. **Ivy from Norham Gardens.** “My sample of English ivy that was given to members in Houston in 2004 is growing well. There was a brief moment of consternation one afternoon when I was sitting on the porch reading and I happened to notice that my wife had planted flowers in the pots and the ivy was not in the container in which I had planted it. It turns out she had moved it out back to a hanging basket and she was vindicated. Do any members have ivy stories to share in regard to the ivy they took home? How many people got around to planting it and is it still alive? Send some photos.
2. **Henry Gray.** “I am writing a history of Henry Gray. Does anyone have any anecdotes about their own copy of *Gray’s Anatomy* that they would like to share. If you are reading a medical novel and see it mentioned please let me know. It is mentioned in *Arrowsmith*. By the way, Osler’s textbook is mentioned in Somerset Maugham’s novel *Of Human Bondage*. Any reference to Henry Gray, however obscure, I would be pleased to be informed. Thanks.

**Editor’s note:** Clyde is an excellent e-mail correspondent: He’s at [clyde\\_partin@emoryhealthcare.org](mailto:clyde_partin@emoryhealthcare.org). I’d just about forgotten about the ivy until I realized that Donna, who has a green thumb, had planted it in a pot by the front door, where it’s thriving. As for *Gray’s Anatomy*—well the worst mistake I made in medical school was to purchase that tome at the professor’s advice rather than one of the more user-friendly regionally-

oriented texts. I’d never dissected so much as a cat, and I found *Gray* to be most difficult! But I still have and cherish my copy! — CSB

**Earl Nation with son Bob and daughter-in-law Cathy at Earl’s home in Sierra Madre, California. Earl created a delightful lunch.**



**Daniel and Katherine Morgan at Chez Panisse, Berkeley, California.**

**Charles Bryan** reports that he and Donna had delightful visits with Earl Nation and the Daniel Morgans during a recent trip to California that combined historical research with visiting friends and relatives.

## Minutes from the Board of Governors Meeting, April 2005

1. The Board of Governors of the American Osler Society met on 10 April 2005 at the Westin Pasadena, Pasadena, California. President Chester R. Burns called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. Present were: Doctors Charles Ambrose, Charles Bryan, Chester Burns, John Carson, Paul Dymont, Lawrence Longo, Neil McIntyre, William McMillan, Daniel Morgan, Sandra Moss, Jock Murray, John Noble, Clyde Partin, Claus Pierach, Charles Roland, Marvin Stone, and Herbert Swick, and Ms. Pamela Miller.
2. A moment of silence was observed to commemorate the memory of members who had died during the previous year, Clark Sawin and Benedict Schneider.
3. The minutes of the 2004 meeting of the Board of Governors were approved as written, distributed, and previously published in *The Oslerian*.
4. Dr. Bryan presented the secretary-treasurer's report. After discussion, Dr. Longo recommended that, for internal accounting purposes, the interest on the John P. McGovern account be reduced from 12% to 6% per year, the basis of this being that the McGovern funds are now quite sufficient to support the intended activities, even allowing for an increase in the honorarium from \$1000 to \$2000. Disposition of the surplus copies of *The Persisting Osler II* and *The Persisting Osler III* were approved as recommended, namely, that shipments would be made to members who request these volumes.
5. William B. Bean Student Research Award Committee: Dr. Swick recommended that three proposals be funded, as no award was made during 2004. These were those of Serena Tan (Duke University School of Medicine), Simon Hanft (Stanford University School of Medicine), and Claire Hoverman (University of Texas-San Antonio School of Medicine). A motion to approve this recommendation was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.
6. John P. McGovern Lectureship Committee. It was reported that the committee (Dr. Robert Martensen, chair) had recommended Dr. Karen Hein is this year's recipient.
7. Nominating Committee: Dr. Carson reported the following nominations: Dr. Francis Neelon for second vice-president and Drs. Sandra Moss, Arthur Gryfe, and Robert Martensen for three-year terms on the Board of Governors.
8. Finance Committee: Dr. Dymont reported that the Society's finances were in order and that he had reviewed the Society's investments.
9. Membership Committee: Dr. Murray recommended five persons for membership (Drs. W. Bryant Boutwell, Christopher William Crenner, Allen J. Dennis, Andrew Z. Fenves, and Russell Lee Silverstein), one for promotion from associate membership to full membership (Dr. John T. Golden), and one (on the recommendation of Dr. Burns) for honorary membership (Dr. John D. Stobo). A motion to approve this recommendation was made, seconded, and passed unanimously. Dr. Burns recommended that future presidents of the Society consider recommending one person each year for honorary membership. It was pointed out that no Bylaws change would be necessary to carry out such a policy.
10. Historian/Archivist: Dr. Roland reported that, since his previous report in 2003, the Osler Library of the History of Medicine at McGill University had sponsored the publication of two additional books and that two more manuscripts were being considered.
11. Program Committee: Dr. Pierach reported on the status of the programs for the 2004 annual meeting.
12. Publications Committee: Dr. Partin reported on the committee's deliberations during the past year. The Board of Governors has approved subvention of a symposium issue (supplement issue) of *The Journal of Medical Biography*. Details for submission of manuscripts have been presented in *The Oslerian*.
13. AOS-AAHM Liaison Committee: Dr. Moss presented a perspective on the current state of the dialogue between the two organizations. Dr. Burns summarized data from the questionnaire he previously distributed to AOS and AAHM members. It was reported that this issue was not discussed at the AAHM Board of Governors meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, which took place just prior to this year's AOS meeting. A plea was made that the leadership of the AAHM not be stereotyped as being hostile to amateur physician-historians. It was also reported that approximately 40 persons attended the Physician-Historian Workshop at the AAHM meeting in Birmingham. Dr. Longo suggested that overlap in the meeting programs was highly desirable (that is, there should be one overlap day, during which meetings could be attended by members of both the AOS and the AAHM). Dr. Burns expressed optimism that AOS and AAHM could pursue joint projects, and others voiced the same opinion.
14. AOS Visiting Professorship: Dr. Burns reported that the AOS Visiting Professorship should be seriously reconsidered. Dr. Noble expressed interest in continuing this project, and soliciting volunteers for the Visiting Professorship. Apportionment of fiscal responsibility between the AOS and the host institution was discussed.
15. Mr. Robert Stone's Video Project: Dr. Stone gave an overview and update of his son's work. It was recommended that the Board of Governors be updated periodically, and members again expressed enthusiasm and wished Mr. Stone great success.
16. Lifetime Achievement Award Committee: Dr. Longo reported that the recipient of the first Lifetime Achievement Award would be Dr. Earl F. Nation. Dr. Longo recommended that criteria for this award consist of outstanding contributions to the medical humanities over the course of a career.
17. Committee appointments: Drs. Burns and Pierach recommended the following persons for committees:
  - A. Finance: Drs. Dymont (chair), Hookman, Canale, and Fye.

## Minutes of the 2005 Board of Governors Meeting *(continued)*

- B. Nominating: Drs. Longo (chair), Stone, and Burns.
- C. William B. Bean Award Committee: Drs. Richard Kahn (chair), Robert Kimbrough, Swick, and another to be named.
- D. John P. McGovern Award Committee: Drs. Paul Kligfield, and two others to be named.
- E. Membership Committee: Drs. Neelon (chair), Morgan, and Miller.
- F. Program Committee: Drs. Murray (chair), Joseph Lella, Philip Leon, and Bryan.
- G. Publications Committee: Drs. Partin (chair), Neelon, Lella and Roland.
- H. Lifetime Achievement Award Committee: Drs. Bruce Fye (chair), Cynthia Pitcock, and Kimbrough.
- I. AOS Visiting Professorship Committee: Dr. Noble (chair) with others to be named.

- 17. Dr. Neelon reported that he was chairing an Ad Hoc Committee to compile a list of recommended readings for twenty-first century medical students.
- 18. Dr. Partin reported his findings as chair of an Ad Hoc Committee for succession of Dr. Bryan as secretary-treasurer. No definitive recommendations were made.
- 19. Dates of future meetings: The 2006 meeting will take place May 1-4 (CHECK) in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The 2007 meeting is tentatively scheduled for Ontreal, April 29-May 2.
- 20. The meeting was adjourned by common consent at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charles S. Bryan  
Secretary-Treasurer

## Minutes from the Annual Meeting, April 2005

- 1. The Annual Meeting of the American Osler Society took place at the Westin Pasadena, Pasadena, California, on 12 April 2005. Dr. Chester R. Burns called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.
- 2. A moment of silence was observed in memory of Drs. Clark T. Sawin and Benedict A. Schneider, who died during the previous year.
- 3. The minutes of the 2004 Annual Meeting were approved as distributed and previously published in *The Oslerian*.
- 4. Dr. Charles Bryan presented the secretary-treasurer's report (*vide supra*).
- 5. Dr. Herbert Swick presented the report of the William B. Bean Student Research Award Committee (*vide supra*).
- 6. Dr. Robert Martensen presented the findings of the John P. McGovern Lectureship Committee (*vide supra*).
- 7. Dr. John Carson presented the report of the Nominating Committee (*vide supra*), in humorous original verse that drew applause. The nominees were elected unanimously.
- 8. Dr. Paul Dyment presented the report of the Finance Committee (*vide supra*).
- 9. Dr. Jock Murray presented the report of the Membership Committee (*vide supra*).
- 10. Dr. Clyde Partin presented the report of the Publications Committee (*vide supra*).
- 11. Dr. Claus Pierach presented the report of the Program Committee (*vide supra*).
- 12. Dr. Sandra Moss presented the report of the AOS-AAHM Liaison Committee from the viewpoint of the AOS (*vide supra*).
- 13. Dr. Charles Roland presented the report of the historian-archivist (*vide supra*).
- 14. Dr. Burns presented the report of the Lifetime Achievement Award Committee in the absence of the chairman, Dr. Lawrence D. Longo. It was reported that Dr. Earl F. Nation would be the recipient of the first such award.
- 15. Dr. John Noble presented the report of the AOS Lectureship Committee (*vide supra*).
- 16. Dr. John Carson gave an update of Mr. Robert Stone's video project (*vide supra*).
- 17. Dr. Frank Neelon presented a report of an ad hoc committee to compile a list of recommended readings for medical students, in the spirit of William Osler's list of 10 such recommendations and subsequent lists from time to time by various members of the Society.
- 18. Dr. Burns reported on the sites and dates for the meetings in 2006 and 2007 (*vide supra*).
- 19. Dr. Burns announced committee appointments for 2005-2006 (*vide supra*).
- 20. Dr. Burns expressed the Society's gratitude to Dr. Karen Hein, this year's John P. McGovern lecturer.
- 21. Newly elected members were introduced and were presented certificates of membership in the Society.
- 22. Dr. Burns introduced Dr. Claus A. Pierach as the new president of the American Osler Society and presented him the symbol of office, the Latchkey.
- 23. Dr. Pierach expressed appreciation to Dr. Burns for excellent service during his term of office. Dr. Pierach presented Dr. Burns the presidential plaque of the American Osler Society.
- 24. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charles S. Bryan  
Secretary-Treasurer

## Welcome New Members

At the annual meeting in Pasadena, five persons were elected to membership (Drs. W. Bryant Boutwell, Christopher William Crenner, Allen J. Dennis, Andrew Z. Fenves, and Russell Lee Silverstein; one was promoted from associate membership to full membership (John T. Golden), and one was elected to honorary membership (John D. Stobo).

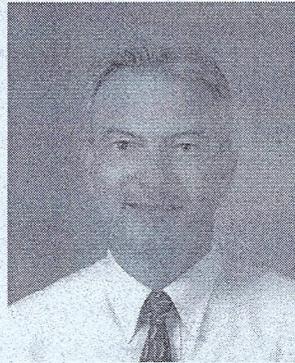
**W. Bryant Boutwell** is Associate Dean for Community Affairs and Professional Education at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston, where he also serves as Professor of Family Practice and Community Medicine. He was the first holder of the John P. McGovern Professorship in Oslerian Medicine at that institution. With John P. McGovern, he co-authored a volume entitled *Conversation with a Medical School: The University of Texas-Houston Medical School, 1970-2000*. Dr. Boutwell, whose doctorate is in public health, is currently planning a book on Osler and professionalism targeted for medical students.

**Christopher Crenner** is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Kansas Medical Center. He received an M.D. and also a Ph.D. in the History of Science and Medicine from Harvard University, and did his internship and residency in internal medicine at the Brigham and Women's Hospital. His major research interest is the development of American medical practice over the past two centuries. Among his publications is "Diagnosis and Authority in the Early Twentieth-Century Medical Practice of Richard C. Cabot" (*Bull Hist Med* 2002; 76 (1): 30-35).

**Allen J. Dennis** is Professor of Medicine Emeritus at the Medical College of Georgia. Following up his presentation in Edinburgh, he is working on a biography of William Charles Wells, who was the first to describe a relationship between proteinuria and renal disease (Editorial note: When the American Revolution started, Wells, being a loyalist to the crown, left Charleston and returned to England! —CSB). This reflects the title of his postdoctoral research topic, "Urinary Lipids in the Nephrotic Syndrome." Prior to retirement he enjoyed a productive career as a nephrologist.

**Andrew Fenves** was born in Budapest, Hungary. Like Dr. Dennis, he is a nephrologist (currently serving as director of the Nephrology Division of Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas) and renal disease as his major research interest (his presentation at the 2004 meeting in Houston was on "The Rise and Fall of Bright's Disease.")

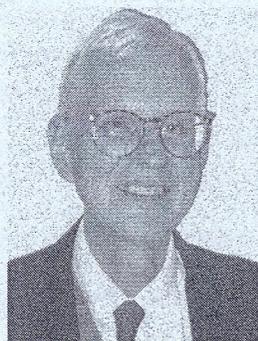
**Russell J. Silverstein**, who like Dr. Fenves is a nephrologist practicing in Dallas, presented to the Society on "Diabetes Mellitus: From Antiquity through Sir William Osler to Banting and Best." He has a broad interest in medical history and has made a number of major contributions to renal diseases.



**W. Bryant Boutwell**



**Christopher W. Crenner**



**Allen J. Dennis**



**Andrew Z. Fenves**

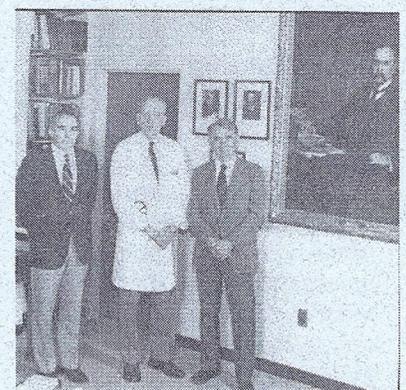


**Russell L. Silverstein**



**John T. Golden (right, with his father Richard), who advanced from associate to regular membership, joins a small but highly select group of father-son Oslerians.**

**John D. Stobo** is president of the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. He previously served as William Osler Professor of Medicine and chair of the Department of Medicine at Johns Hopkins. His immediate predecessors (at right, beneath a portrait of William Osler), featured prominently in the founding of the American Osler Society. Dr. Stobo has given a McGovern Lecture to the Society.



**John D. Stobo (left) with charter members Victor A. McKusick and the late A. McGehee Harvey beside a portrait of Sir William Osler.**

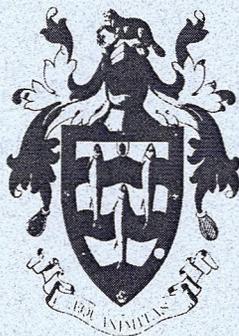
## AMERICAN OSLER SOCIETY

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### Aequanimitas

*The Oslerian is published approximately four times a year by the American Osler Society, Inc., a non-profit organization. Members of the American Osler Society are encouraged to send news items of interest, including but by no means limited to their personal activities and accomplishments and accompanied by photographs or other illustrations. For distribution of reprints and other materials of possible interest to AOS members, please send 180 copies. Your ideas for The Oslerian are of course most welcome! Direct all correspondence by mail, fax, or e-mail to the Secretary-Treasurer.*

The American Osler Society has been founded for the purpose of bringing together members of the medical and allied professions who are, by their common inspiration, dedicated to memorialize and perpetuate the just and charitable life, the intellectual resourcefulness and the ethical example of **William Osler** (1849-1919). This, for the benefit of succeeding generations, that their motives be ever more sound, that their vision be on everbroadening horizons, and that they sail not as Sir Thomas Browne's Ark, without oars and without rudder and sails and, therefore, without direction.

## Call for Abstracts for 2006 Annual Meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1-4 May

The Board of Governors will meet on Monday, 1 May. Assuming that we once again have a surplus of abstracts, we will meet through the afternoon of Thursday, 4 May. We anticipate that the Thursday sessions will overlap with events scheduled by the American Association for the History of Medicine, and we are exploring the possibilities for a joint session.

For several years we have received more quality submissions that can be accommodated. The Program Committee will be chaired by the First Vice-President, T. Jock Murray. Please note the following guidelines for submission of abstracts (some of these are required for Continuing Medical Education credits):

1. Abstracts can be sent by e-mail to: smitche@gw.mp.sc.edu or by regular mail. If sent by e-mail they must be **received** by 1 November 2005; if sent by regular mail, they must be **received** by 15 November 2005. Early submission is encouraged. Abstracts submitted by e-mail will be acknowledged. However, we will not be responsible for lost e-mail submissions.
2. The abstract should be no longer than one page. It should begin with the complete title, the names of all co-authors, and the corresponding author's mailing address, telephone number, FAX, and e-mail address. This should be followed by a two- to three-sentence biographical sketch indicating how the author would like to be introduced (This will probably be your entire introduction. Don't be modest!). The text should provide sufficient information for the Program Committee to determine its merits and possible interest to the membership. The problem should be defined and the conclusions should be stated. Phrases such as "will be presented" should be avoided or kept to a minimum.
3. Three learning objectives should be given after the abstract. Each learning objective should begin with an active verb indicating what attendees should be able to *do* after the presentation (for example, "list," "explain," "discuss," "examine," "evaluate," "define," "contrast," or "outline"; avoid noncommittal verbs such as "know," "learn," and "appreciate"), which is required for Continuing Medical Education.
4. A cover letter should state:
  - Whether any of the authors have a potential conflict-of-interest such as direct financial involvement in the topic being discussed, and whether there will be any mention of off-label use of drugs or other products during the presentation.
  - Audiovisual requirements for the presentation (e.g., computer and LCD or 35 mm projector).
  - *Optional*: Whether the author(s) insist on a time slot longer than 20 minutes (At the 2004 and 2005 meetings, we determined that 20-minute time slots, with papers carefully timed to 15 minutes, work quite well for nearly all presentations).

**Abstracts will be accepted by e-mail up until 1 November 2005 (smitche@gw.mp.sc.edu) or by regular mail up until 15 November 2005. If submitting by regular mail, please send five copies of the abstract, a computer diskette containing the abstract (ideally in Microsoft Word format), and a cover letter to: Charles S. Bryan, Secretary-Treasurer, American Osler Society, Two Medical Park, Suite 502, Columbia, SC 29203. Again, the deadline for receipt by e-mail is 1 November 2005 and by regular mail 15 November 2005.**