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2017 Health Meeting in Review

By Jennifer Gerstorff

The Society of Actuaries' (SOA's) Health Meeting is an annual continuing education event that is attended by more credentialed health actuaries than any other industry meeting directed at actuaries practicing in the health care field. The meeting offers an abundance of quality continuing education and networking opportunities. Attendees range in experience from those who are newly qualified to those with decades of experience, with varying backgrounds that include health insurance, consulting, state and federal governments, and education and research. This year's meeting took place in Hollywood, Florida, from June 12 to 14. Figure 1 illustrates the number of registered attendees and overall quality rating over the past few years by meeting location.

Figure 1
Health Meeting Attendees

Year	Location	Attendees	Rating
2014	San Francisco	1,007	4.00
2015	Atlanta	925	4.09
2016	Philadelphia	1,047	4.14
2017	Hollywood, FL	945	4.28

Audio recordings of all meeting sessions can be downloaded by Health Section members at no cost on the meeting's website, <https://www.soa.org/prof-dev/events/2017-Health-Meeting/>.

INNOVATIONS IN 2017

Every year, the SOA staff in conjunction with the Health Council's planning committee aim to increase innovation to optimize attendees' experience. This year's meeting included several new or enhanced features:

- The SOA meeting mobile application was enhanced to include an option for completing session and meeting evaluations, such that people could send in evaluations at any point after attending a session rather than completing the paper form before leaving the session.

- There was an increase in presenters' use of live polling technology during sessions to encourage higher audience engagement.
- One of the primary goals of the 2017 planning committee was to schedule more nonstandard session formats to help the audience engage more with presenters, leading to better retention of presented information and content that becomes customized to participating attendees. These more dynamic session structures lend themselves well to all the uncertainty around and the constantly changing health care market.
- Our second primary goal was to recruit a higher percentage of non-actuary speakers for our breakout sessions. While we have a great pool of actuarial volunteers, session evaluations consistently report high satisfaction with outsiders. In addition to finding non-actuarial speakers who have high audience engagement skills, they also tend to bring a more rounded perspective to our technical minds.

KEYNOTES

For SOA members who opt to join the Health Section, the SOA collects annual dues that fund a variety of Health Section activities. The two biggest expenses are health research and health meeting keynote speakers. The meeting planning committee recognizes that our section members expect high quality and value for their investment, and we agreed on two brilliant keynote speakers this year. Attendees who completed an evaluation seem to agree based on these statistics, based on roughly 180 respondents, as shown in Figure 2.

Nick Buettner, community and corporate program director for the Blue Zones Project, kicked things off during the opening general session, giving us a lot to think about over the course of the meeting. With the SOA Health Section's increasing focus on public health, it was highly interesting to hear about the immersive research that's been conducted by the Blue Zones team to date. Nick shared lessons they have learned through interviews with centenarians in pockets of the world where the population survives past age 100 at a higher rate than most areas of the world. For more information on Blue Zones, check out their website, <https://bluezones.com>.

Amy Cuddy, associate professor at Harvard Business School, social psychologist and author of *Presence: Bringing Your*

One of the primary goals of the 2017 planning committee was to help the audience engage more with presenters.

Figure 2
Member Ratings of Keynote Speakers

Speaker	Value of Content		Effectiveness of Delivery	
	Average Score	5-Star Rating	Average Score	5-Star Rating
Nick Buettner	4.39	53%	4.61	70%
Amy Cuddy	3.95	34%	4.30	52%

Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges, brought a strong presence to the stage and presented us with concepts to consider that are intended to help us become more confident with ourselves in our professional and personal lives using our body language and posture. She also presented the results of some recent gender studies that reiterate a common message in today’s society: the campaign for women’s equality in the workplace has a long road to travel, and an important focus for everyone is empowering our young girls throughout their lives to be confident and expect equality. Amy has the second most popular TED talk ever, with more than 42 million views on the TED website: https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

On behalf of the Leadership & Development Section in collaboration with the SOA Inclusion and Diversity Committee and the Actuary of the Future Section, Olga Jacobs continued the trend of a strong women’s forum session as a centerpiece of the meeting. Immediately following Amy Cuddy’s empowering keynote speech, the panel of health industry leaders presented an engaging discussion on women’s leadership. This year’s panel featured Deborah Watkins, chief executive officer of Care Bridge International; Andie Christopherson, vice president and chief actuary at BCBS Minnesota; and Larry Smart, chief actuary at Wellcare.

The headliner for this year’s Health Section breakfast was Timothy Jost, emeritus professor, Washington and Lee University School of Law. Many of us know him as a frequent contributor to the *Health Affairs* blog and journal articles, where he shares his thoughts and research on breaking health care news. While we do not collect attendee evaluations for the section breakfasts, I heard several anecdotes from star-struck actuaries about attending Tim’s talk.

SUBGROUP ACTIVITY

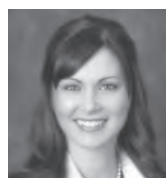
The Health Section Council has been actively working to enhance section members’ access to continuing education and networking opportunities through the support of health care topic subgroups of the Health Section. To review available interest groups and sign up for the email distribution lists, check out the website, <https://www.soa.org/News-and-Publications/Listservs/list-public-listservs.aspx>.

One of the most active subgroups to date is the Medicaid subgroup. Members participate in regularly scheduled monthly calls, have access to a private group LinkedIn site, receive monthly Medicaid news updates and meet up for good conversation at the SOA’s health meeting. This year, in addition to Medicaid breakout sessions (that always turn into panel/audience discussions), we reserved lunch tables at the meeting’s networking lunch to get the group together. Face-to-face discussions like this help facilitate active participation in the group’s monthly calls.

The newest subgroup is focused on Public Health, headed up by Sara Teppema and Engy Sutherland. The leaders of the initiative coordinated Session 79 Panel Discussion: Why Health Actuaries Need to Care About Public Health. Many attendees joined the subgroup at that time, and the doors are still open and ready for new members. To review slides from the presentation, check out this link: <https://www.soa.org/pd/events/2017/health-meeting/pd-2017-06-health-session-079.pdf>.

THANK-YOUS

In closing, I would like to thank the SOA Health Section Council for their support of the meeting planning committee, of me as the committee’s chair and of the meeting itself. Ashlee Borcan and Jackie Lee put in tremendous effort as co-chairs of the committee in pulling the content for the meeting together. Joe Wurzburger, our SOA staff fellow, was the committee’s rock, as usual. He served as a sounding board as the committee reviewed content for inclusion, coordinated activities between the committee and SOA staff, and took charge on developing professionalism content for the meeting. I’d also like to include a special shout-out to Hans Leida, who presented content at five sessions during the Health Meeting and one additional session at the postmeeting Best Practices Seminar. As anyone who has ever volunteered to present knows, preparing as a speaker is a lot of work. Preparing for six total sessions seems like a super-actuary feat. Somebody give this guy a cape! ■



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