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# 2016 SOA Health Meeting: Event in Review

By Brian Pauley

The Society of Actuaries (SOA) Health Meeting, held each June, is the flagship event for the SOA Health Section. For each meeting, the planning committee strives to provide relevant and timely continuing education and networking opportunities to health actuaries. This year's event was held June 15–17 at the Marriott Downtown in Philadelphia.

The meeting planning began back in November. While June seemed far away at the time, it arrived very quickly! The program committee had two goals in mind relative to the previous year's meeting in Atlanta:

- Increased registration count
- Higher overall meeting rating

With the 2016 SOA Annual Meeting & Exhibit taking place in Las Vegas in October, competition for attendees looking to fulfill their continuing education requirements would be tough. But, the program committee was optimistic! I'm happy to let *Health Watch* readers know that with 1,060 registrations and an overall meeting rating of 4.14, it was the highest attended and second-highest-rated (4.15 in 2011) SOA Health Meeting ever. It was just one-hundredth of a point off from the highest-rated meeting ever!

The 2016 Health Meeting featured sessions covering topics from a wide variety of areas front and center to health actuaries including, but not limited to:

- Affordable Care Act (ACA) and exchange business
- Predictive analytics
- Reserving
- Medicare Advantage and Part D bidding
- Medicaid
- Public health

It also featured sessions covering interesting, niche topics including, but not limited, to:

- Pet insurance
- Machine learning
- Microinsurance
- Pharmacy reinsurance

As a program committee, we pride ourselves in bringing forth a variety of speakers, both actuaries and non-actuaries alike. This year, there were a total of 251 speakers, including 76 non-actuaries, covering 98 concurrent sessions.

Some of the highest-rated sessions included those featuring regulators. A few standouts included:

- Ask the Regulator: Professionalism for Health Actuaries Through the Eyes of Regulators
- ORSA From Regulators' Perspective
- Chief Financial Regulator Panel on Regulatory Initiatives
- Commissioners' Roundtable

I'd like to recognize and thank the regulators who so generously shared their time and expertise with us, including regulatory actuaries Rhonda Ahrens, Jan Graeber, Annette James, Steve Ostlund and Teresa Winer; chief financial regulators Mel Anderson, Michael Humphreys and Ray Martinez; and state insurance commissioners John Franchini, Teresa Miller and Al Redmer.

On Wednesday, the meeting opened up with a speech by SOA President Craig Reynolds, who briefed attendees on:

- The 2017–2021 strategic plan
- Research efforts, which include annual updates to the model for the projection of long-term health care cost trends



- Actuarial education, including a new point of emphasis on predictive analytics
- The growing number of international actuaries
- The latest SOA efforts on inclusion and diversity

The meeting then moved to the keynote talk by Barbara Corcoran, one of the “sharks” featured on ABC’s hit TV show *Shark Tank*. Barbara offered attendees the same spunky personality that has made her a regular on the show, where she has to go toe-to-toe with the likes of Mark Cuban and Lori Greiner. She shared her Manhattan rags-to-riches real estate story and emphasized:

- Perception creates reality.
- There are two kinds of people: expanders and containers.
- “Shoot the dogs early” (i.e., don’t allow performance issues to linger).
- Having fun is good for business.
- Fail well, for it is the beginning of your next big hit.
- You have the right to be there.

Sessions and speakers on leadership and development are typically the most highly rated at the SOA Health Meeting. On Wednesday, the Women’s Leadership Forum took place featuring a keynote presentation by Yvette Bright and a panel discussion with Mary Van der Heijde, Lucinda Lewis, Randy Termeer, Sarah Osborne and Linda Williams. Interactive table discussions and a networking lunch helped to wrap up the forum.

On Thursday morning, a group of attendees participated in the 5K Fun Run/Walk, which we dubbed “The Rocky Run.” The mid-point of the run was centered on the steps leading up to the Philadelphia Museum of Art made famous in the 1976 Oscar-winning movie *Rocky*. While not intentional, the early start time of 6 a.m. made everyone feel just like the movie, despite no one consuming raw eggs before beginning. Participants were

encouraged to dress up as Rocky for the event, with the top three based on participants’ applause receiving a prize.

Thursday also featured the general luncheon keynote speaker Vince Papale. A retired professional football player, Vince was the subject of the 2006 Disney movie *Invincible*, where he was played by Hollywood star Mark Wahlberg. With a contagious energy and likable personality, Vince was a hit with attendees as he talked about the movie and encouraged attendees to be great and “invincible” by focusing on things such as “no one ever drowned in sweat,” and that many keys to success actually take no talent such as being positive and on time.

Friday opened up with the Health Section Breakfast, where Sara Teppema spoke about a new strategic initiative for the Health Section focusing on the role of actuaries in public health. Then, Paul Spitalnic, the final keynote speaker of the meeting, invited attendees to offer their thoughts on emerging actuarial questions that he encounters as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) chief actuary.

I want to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the meeting. Jenny Gerstorff and Sarah Osborne, the two Program Committee vice-chairpersons, put in a tremendous effort to ensure that we had a great session slate and keynote speakers. Jenny and Sarah will serve as chairperson and vice-chairperson, respectively, of the 2017 Health Meeting. Also, the meeting would not have been successful without the support and contributions of the SOA staff, including Joe Wurzburger, Anna Abel and Leslie Smith. With this same group intact, I could not be more excited about the prospects of next year’s continued success.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the 2017 Health Meeting in Hollywood, Florida! ■



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