

MARCH 2024
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The Importance of **Cultivating** Leadership





Association for the Advancement
of Blood & Biotherapies

Emerging Infectious Diseases Special Issue of *TRANSFUSION*

AABB is pleased to announce The Emerging Infectious Diseases special issue of *TRANSFUSION* is now available to AABB members. This issue was prepared by the AABB Transfusion Transmitted Diseases Committee and comprises 72 fact sheets with the latest critical information on infectious diseases for the field — the first comprehensive update since 2009.

This special edition includes 5 sections covering:

- prions
- bacteria
- protozoa/nematodes
- viruses
- other bacteria

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Cultivating Leadership in the Lab

Transfusion medicine leaders discuss essential leadership skills for laboratory professionals seeking to thrive and advance their career.



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Nine Leadership Lessons with Kim-Anh Nguyen, MD, PhD

In honor of Women's History Month, this interview highlights the CEO's journey as a female leader in blood banking and her impact on her community.



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Workforce Development: Enhancing Skills for Biotherapies Professionals

Cell processing labs that support the work of clinical teams and institutions now need support to hire and retain talented professionals.



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Cultivating the Next Generation of Leaders

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."

—John C. Maxwell

One of my favorite aspects of being a leader in the blood and biotherapies field is the opportunity to make an impact and to inspire others. As president of AABB, I have the privilege of encouraging colleagues near and far to further develop their careers and to rally behind our Association's mission to improve lives by making transfusion medicine and biotherapies safe, available and effective worldwide. As we encourage others to succeed and advance, we can continue to elevate the field, and inspire new research and future advancements that will, ultimately, bring about better health outcomes for donors and patients.

This issue of *AABB News* is dedicated to leadership, a critical pillar for every field. Particularly for the field of blood and biotherapies, we know that investing in the next generation of leadership is essential. The field is growing rapidly, workforce challenges remain and older generations of professionals are retiring. To maintain our field's momentum, we need to ensure upcoming generations are ready to lead and help bring about future advancements.

Leadership Resources

AABB understands the importance of empowering and cultivating the next generation of leaders in our field. AABB has developed new leadership resources and educational opportunities for emerging and established professionals in blood and biotherapies. These include the AABB Certified Advanced

Biotherapies Professional (CABP), the first credentialing program for biotherapies professionals, and the new Leadership Certificate in Blood Banking and Transfusion Medicine program.

These resources and more—which are described in greater detail in the pages ahead—have been designed to equip professionals with the skills and knowledge to grow professionally and thrive in leadership roles. I encourage members to take a closer look, find the program that best fits your needs, and take advantage of AABB's offerings.

2024 AABB Annual Meeting

October may seem far away, but we are already planning for the 2024 AABB Annual Meeting, which will be held October 19-22 in Houston. I hope to see many of you there—so please mark your calendars now.

Among the many opportunities at the AABB Annual Meeting, the event provides an opportunity to get your research seen by colleagues throughout the world. AABB is currently accepting abstract submissions in all areas of blood and biotherapies. The submission period runs through May 6, and I strongly encourage members to submit their work. Research is the fuel that can help propel innovations and advancements; I'm already looking forward to seeing the groundbreaking research at this year's Meeting. ■

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AABB President

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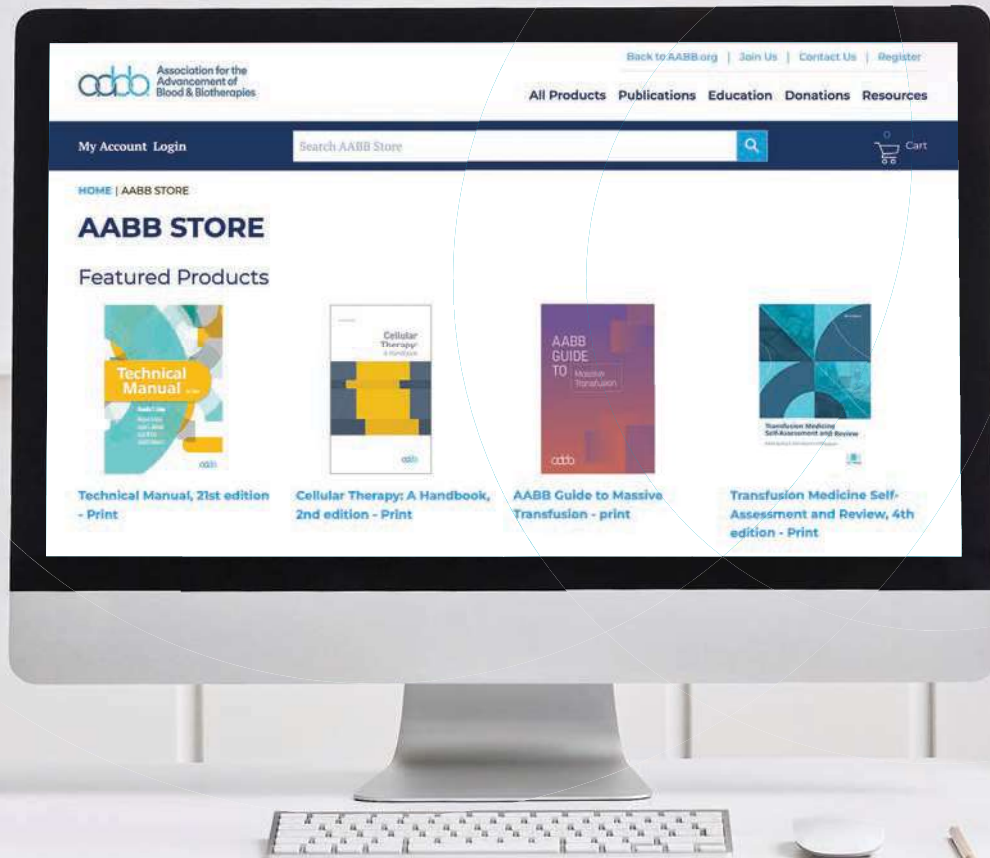
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Leading with Heart: AABB Foundation President Sets out to Improve Lives Through Research

By Kendra Y. Applewhite, MFA
Managing Editor



Jose A. Cancelas, MD, PhD, CABP

Jose A. Cancelas, MD, PhD, CABP, is a professor and director of Hoxworth Blood Center, University of Cincinnati, and the director of the Translational Core Laboratories at Cincinnati and Stem Cell Program leader at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Cancelas's interests include evidence-based cellular therapies and innovation in transfusion medicine. His research focuses on stem cell biology in health and disease, and development of systems to generate and preserve blood cells.

Cancelas earned a bachelor of science degree and a medical doctor degree at the Autonomous University of Madrid, then a PhD at the University of Alcalá de Henares in Madrid. He received his medical specialty training in hematology and hemotherapy at the Hospital Ramon y Cajal in Madrid, and his training in blood banking and transfusion medicine at Hoxworth Blood Center in Cincinnati. He obtained doctoral and post-doctoral training in the Cancer Research Institute of Barcelona in Spain, the Erasmus University of Rotterdam in the Netherlands and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

Cancelas has been an active member of AABB since 2002 and has served as chair of the AABB Scientific Committee of the Education Program Committee. He is currently the president of the AABB Foundation Board of Directors and also serves as the AABB vice president and a member of the AABB Abstract Review Committee. Cancelas has received numerous research grants and has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health since 2009. He is the recipient of the David B. Pall Prize for Innovative Research in Transfusion Medicine, Healthcare Heroes Innovator Award of Cincinnati and Core Values Award of the University of Cincinnati. He is also a member of the AABB Foundation Hall of Fame.

Cancelas spoke with *AABB News* about his leadership journey, the importance of paying it forward and his commitment to raise awareness about the AABB Foundation.

THE JOURNEY

What initially drew you to the field of transfusion medicine and biotherapies?

I was initially interested in blood biology and blood pathology during medical school. I was an intern in the department of biochemistry in Madrid. I started working with red cells at the university, and I found it fascinating. I learned a lot about biochemistry of red cells and since then, I've been linked to blood in every aspect, including physiology and pathology.

How did you get involved with AABB?

In 1995, I began studying the *AABB Technical Manual*, a widely recognized publication studied by transfusion medicine doctors and technologists throughout the world. After I came to the United States, I became an AABB member and attended my first AABB Annual Meeting in 2002. I was invited to serve on AABB's educational and research committees over time. In 2019, I was elected to be an at-large member of the AABB Board of Directors, and in 2023, I began my term as AABB vice president and president of the AABB Foundation Board of Directors.

Can you tell us about your leadership journey, including your executive role at the University of Cincinnati?

My plan was to train in Cincinnati and return to Spain in two years. Now, 23 years later, it has been a great journey for me. I started as a research associate, and then offered a position as division director of research in Hoxworth Blood Center (succeeding the great Dr. Tibor Greenwalt) and associate professor of

pediatrics. After that I became tenured-track associate professor of pediatrics, tenured professor and then eventually director of Hoxworth Blood Center. Three years ago, I became chairman of the Hoxworth Blood Center academic department, the only blood center academic department in the U.S.

THE MISSION

What impact would you like to make while leading the AABB Foundation?

First, I want to raise awareness to ensure that all AABB members know about the AABB Foundation and what it has to offer. Secondly, I want every AABB member to become an advocate for the AABB Foundation and contribute to its mission, promoting innovation and advancement in the areas of transfusion medicine and biotherapies. I want to create a sense of belonging of the AABB membership to the Foundation. The first step is for all of us to consider the Foundation as our house where our donations are investments in the future of hemotherapies. I ask every AABB member to contribute to the Foundation in any way or form they can at any amount they can, whether that's donating monthly or annually. Every dollar counts.

As a long-time supporter, why is it important to give back to the AABB Foundation?

The AABB Foundation addresses our mission by supporting research and providing educational opportunities, especially for early-career investigators. It's very important that all of us support the mission of the AABB Foundation to move forward and advance transfusion medicine and biotherapies worldwide.

You received a Foundation grant in 2005. How has the funding from the Foundation helped to shape your career?

The AABB Foundation was a crucial step in my career. Although I had received grants in Spain for my research, the AABB Foundation provided me with my first extramural grant in 2005 to support my research in the U.S. As a result, I was able to generate data that cemented the fundamentals of my research endeavors. I'm extremely grateful to the AABB Foundation for supporting my research.

THE LESSONS

What words of wisdom do you have for aspiring leaders in transfusion medicine and biotherapies?

I want to remind all health care professionals that

as important as it is to understand pathology, it is equally important to understand physiology. The field of biotherapies is probably the only medical specialty in which understanding donor-derived blood cell physiology results in innovative therapies synergizes with our knowledge of pathology to treat (and cure) very sick people.

Can you provide one helpful tip for applying for a grant?

My advice to any early-career researcher without grant writing experience is to identify a mentor. This is crucial. People succeed in grant funding because they have a mentor who can provide instruction and teach them how to write a grant.

For example, when I started many years ago, my mentor, Dr. Alberto Sols, professor and chair of Biochemistry and director of the Institute of Enzymology of the Spanish National Council of Research in the Autonomous University of Madrid, passed away; I was "mentorless" and struggled for a few years. I finally found a great—and my best—mentor in the U.S. I was lucky that he spent time with me. I had grant awards in Spain, and I knew how to write a grant in Europe, but writing a successful grant proposal in the U.S. was a completely different experience. I learned it was important to have an American mentor with experience in getting grants funded.

What's the last leadership book you read that inspired you?

Every night, I stop working around 8:00 PM to read a book for one hour before I go to bed. My current read is *The Incurable Physician: An Autobiography of Dr. Walter C. Alvarez*. It's a very interesting story about a person who really wants to cure and help people. I also went into medicine for the same reason. My interest has always been, to the best of my abilities, to help others.

I chose biotherapies and blood transfusion medicine because I have more impact in my role than any other medical profession I could have chosen. A physician taking care of patients might see a few thousand patients in his/her entire career. As a physician who oversees blood therapies and biotherapies in a 2 million people community, my team and I serve and impact approximately 100,000 people every year. From a public health perspective, with my modest expertise in blood biology and pathology, this is the best way I can help my neighbors, right where I am. I want to believe that many of them are alive today because of the blood and biotherapy products that we have generated for them. ■

To learn more about the AABB Foundation and to support its mission, visit aabb.org/foundation.