Introducing Brian Reynolds, IAHCSMM’s 2020-2021 President

Each year, just prior to the conclusion of the IAHCSMM Annual Conference, IAHCSMM’s outgoing President passes the gavel to his or her successor – a move that officially marks the transition and introduces the Sterile Processing (SP) professionals in attendance to IAHCSMM’s newest leader of the Board of Directors.

While the unfortunate cancellation of our Conference & Expo prevented such an introduction from occurring this year, the Association is, nonetheless, in strong, capable hands – and it’s an honor to introduce Brian Reynolds, CRCST, CIS, CER, CHL, as the Association’s next President.

Throughout his term as President-Elect, Reynolds played an active role on the IAHCSMM Board of Directors, working alongside his fellow Board members to ensure forward progress on the strategic plan, address important issues impacting IAHCSMM and the SP discipline, and lay the foundation for future growth and developments that will allow the Association to further support the profession. Over the past year, Reynolds found valuable support and encouragement in his immediate presidential predecessors, Tony Thurmond and Damien Berg, as well as those who came before them, including David Jagrosse and Sharon Greene-Golden, both of whom served as mentors and guideposts, which helped steer Reynolds to this place of leadership.

Reynolds, who currently serves as Assistant Chief of Sterile Processing Service for West Palm Beach VA Medical Center, brings to his term more than three decades of SP experience. That 30-plus-year foundation is more than a mere footnote for Reynolds. He plans to use that experience and his passion for the discipline to connect with his fellow SP professionals and keep him focused on his primary presidential goal: to serve and support IAHCSMM so the Association can continue serving and supporting the profession in the most meaningful ways.

“Our focus is and always has been to support the Sterile Processing professionals so they can support patient care and help make sure every patient leaves the facility better than when they came,” he said.

In the following Q&A, Reynolds offers a glimpse into his thoughts on what it means to serve as IAHCSMM President, as well as some of the areas he hopes to focus his attention in support of IAHCSMM and its core mission of promoting patient safety by raising the level of expertise and recognition for those in the SP profession.

Q: What excites you most about serving as IAHCSMM’s President?
Reynolds: For a long time, I was working in the profession, earning my certifications and still not really knowing what IAHCSMM was all about and what it was doing for the profession. I thought about getting involved, but I let it go for a while because I was busy with other things. One day, I was speaking with one of my mentors, Jimmy Lloyd, and we were discussing some of the changes and expectations taking place within the profession and what we Sterile Processing professionals needed to do – and then he said something that stayed with me: we can’t do anything unless we’re in the fight to win it. Ever since then, I thought, ‘How can I affect change if I’m not part of the voice or reason behind what we do for this profession?’ That’s when I decided to become more involved in the Association.

I’m honored to be in this role and I’m grateful for all the support, advice and encouragement I’ve gotten along the way. Tony Thurmond and Damien Berg have been a godsend, as have [Past-Presidents] Dave Jagrosse and Sharon Greene-Golden who also were very instrumental in helping me get to this point. I’m elated to be part of this organization. The thing that excites me most is trying to be a pillar of hope for Sterile Processing professionals and being an integral part of positive change within IAHCSMM – all for the sake of the profession.
Q: Which issues are particularly on your radar as you assume the IAHCSMM Presidency?

Reynolds: A lot of people asked me what I’m going to do during my term as IAHCSMM President. The truth is there’s a succession plan each of us presidents must follow. I’ll be working with the rest of the IAHCSMM Board of Directors to stay focused on our current and future strategic plan. I always try to listen and learn from others working in the profession; it’s important to understand their concerns and see how we can support them. Chapter support is one area of focus for me and the IAHCSMM Board. Although I’m not a big public speaker, I’d love to go out and meet with chapters more to answer questions, give support, and help speak about the growth and potential that is possible for their chapter. There is no step-by-step manual that shows chapters how to do things and be successful because not everything is black and white. It’s important to help them avoid pitfalls and share our stories on what worked and what didn’t for our own chapters. Chapters are there to support the profession and IAHCSMM is working on more ways to help support them in that journey.

I also think it’s important to talk about the realities of compensation. I think we all agree that Sterile Processing professionals want and deserve more pay, but the expectations of how we get there can be unrealistic. Sterile Processing professionals are the ones who need to be sitting at the table with their facilities and organizations to address this issue. IAHCSMM can’t do that for us and no other organization can, either – just like AORN can’t do it for the OR nurses. As Sterile Processing professionals, only we can talk about what we do and why we are important to patient care. An association can’t steer pay, but they can give us the tools, support and education to help us succeed on the job and sit at that table and discuss compensation and other important issues with greater confidence.

Q: Is there anything that keeps you awake at night regarding the profession?

Reynolds: I try not to let things affect me that way, but I’m human and there is something that is getting to me – and that is how many organizations are not providing an opportunity for technicians to work their way up through hard work and experience into those leadership positions within the department. Organizations need to be providing succession plans and allowing for more upward growth within the profession. Often, we’re seeing degreed clinicians with no experience in Sterile Processing moving into those manager and director roles. In my experience, some can be great, but not all have the passion for the role, and they may not be committed to fully understanding all the technicians’ responsibilities and requirements and their importance to patient safety. We need to somehow get the message through that we are good enough to hold that leadership seat. We are the absolute best people to be in that role because we understand all the responsibilities and areas of the department.

As a manager who’s been working in this profession for about 30 years, if I have technicians call out, I can go into Decontam and help keep us on track because I’ve been there and know that part of the job well, and the same goes for the other areas of the department. This is a very important factor that facilities and organizations need to consider. Again, we are the experts. We need to be valued and considered for these leadership roles. In healthcare, patient safety and good outcomes should be everyone’s priority. Having the right people in the right jobs obviously plays a big role in that.