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MassMEDIC Highlights Device Industry Trends, Issues

With more than 400 hundred representatives from the medical device industry in attendance, this year's Massachusetts Medical Device Industry Council (MassMEDIC) meeting brought important issues and trends to the forefront of the medical device industry.

The meeting opened with the 10th annual report presented by Thomas J. Sommer, president of MassMEDIC. In his opening remarks, Sommer commented on the global reach of medical device manufacturing in Massachusetts.

"Medical devices are not only manufactured here [in state], they're also designed here," said Sommer. "They're not just used in local hospitals, but also in medical facilities throughout the world."

Sommer added that the state's medical device industry is comprised of 225 companies, 21,000 workers, 17,000 employees with industry-related jobs, $5 billion in annual sales and about $2 billion in exports in the last year alone.

Also on hand was Ray Kurzweil, founder, chairman and CEO of Kurzweil Technologies, Inc., who theorized how computers can attain higher levels of intelligence—and ultimately human levels and beyond. He conjectured that "reverse engineering" the human brain to increase software intelligence would be the most compelling scenario for achieving that goal.

Larry G. Kessler, ScD, director of the Office of Science and Engineering Laboratories for the FDA, raised awareness to the alarming rate of Class I recalls over the past two years (see Editor's Letter on page 8). On a separate note, he said the FDA is now considering regulating the requirement of Unique Device Identification for every medical device in the country.

After a short networking break, Carolyn Runowicz, MD, author and president of the American Cancer Society, commented on the relationship between cancer rates and genetics in women.

Finally, Dean Kamen, medical device innovator and founder of DEKA Research & Development Corporation, spoke about his numerous inventions, including the iBOT Mobility System, an all-terrain wheelchair capable of traversing stairs.

MassMEDIC continues to be an informative gathering of the most prominent individuals in the medical device industry. ❖





Above: Thomas J. Sommer addresses the attendees in his opening remarks.

Left: More than 400 attendees listening to the various speakers at MassMEDIC.

Below: Ray Kurzweil addresses the attendees about "reverse engineering" the human brain in an attempt to increase a computer's level of awareness.



Photos courtesy of Joey Libby Photography.