



David A. Wong, MD, MSc, FRCS(C)
President, NASS
Co-chair, NASS Patient Safety Task Force
Denver Orthopedic Clinic
Denver, CO

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SPECIAL FEATURE

Specialty Coalitions: Another Route to Patient Safety

One truth in a volunteer environment (or any other, for that matter) is that more is accomplished when people work together than alone. Mindful of this principle, particularly when addressing broad issues such as patient safety, we are developing coalitions to broaden our accomplishments without doubling our workload or duplicating that of others.

Currently NASS is an active member of two major patient safety coalitions:

The Orthopedic Coalition

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) has developed an orthopedic coalition with a mission to develop and implement programs that promote patient safety in all aspects of orthopedic care. The coalition works with NASS, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and other appropriate organizations with the primary goal of enhancing knowledge of safe medical practices by both orthopedic surgeons and patients. The coalition consists of orthopedic specialty societies, AAOS councils, state orthopedic societies, the AAOS Board of Councilors, BONES, the National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses, orthopedic academic training programs, orthopedic industry, the Orthopaedic Research and Education Foundation and the military. I currently serve as both a cochair of the NASS Patient Safety Task Force and as chair of the AAOS Patient Safety Committee and Coalition, solidly linking our efforts and securing NASS involvement.

To date, the coalition has met once. We have examined basic patient safety tenets, outlined AAOS and NASS efforts, determined the coalition's agenda and established where in the spectrum of patient safety activities each

invited group stands. It's clear that the spectrum is pretty broad – whereas AAOS and NASS have been very active, other groups are just getting started. One of the goals of this group is to prevent reinventing the wheel by sharing the materials we all have. The coalition also discussed what resources each group might be able to contribute.

NASS Multispecialty Coalition

A further extension of NASS' efforts with the orthopedic coalition this year will be to reach out to its partners among the other specialties and professions outside orthopedics that provide spine care. We will do this by:

- creating an advisory panel to the NASS Patient Safety Task Force. This advisory panel will provide representation from the various specialties and allied health professions.
- extending outreach and alliances to other specialties through NASS. This will include developing a package of available NASS patient safety materials and what we can offer (discounts, Web site links, alliance opportunities). We also plan to develop some basic educational presentation materials on patient safety to offer our partners.

If you know of any patient safety efforts going on within your specialty or member organizations, please let us know by contacting Pam Hayden, Director of Research, at (815) 675-0021 or hayden@spine.org. We would like to join forces with as many groups as possible to spread the patient safety message.

Acknowledgment

Pamela M. Hayden also contributed to this article. Pamela is the Director of Research at the North American Spine Society.