



# Special Booths and Services at Annual Meeting

## Chicago, October 26-30, 2004

A number of special booths and display areas will be helpful to attendees who are seeking additional information at the Annual Meeting. These booths will be located on Level 3, Room 354a, near NASS Member Services. Additional information about specific NASS programs and activities will be available at the following booths:

### NASS ARCHIVES

The NASS Archives Task Force presents a display about spine-specific history at each Annual Meeting. On alternate years, people who figure prominently in the history of NASS or the history of spine are profiled. Stop by to see who's profiled this year! Copies of *Spine History on the Internet* will be available and contributors to the *Signature Edition Collection* will be recognized along with those NASS members who have passed away during the previous year.

### SPINE SAFETY: NASS TOOLS & INITIATIVES

The Patient Safety Task Force has developed a number of NASS tools and initiatives to help you help your patients stay safe. Come see first hand the Sign, Mark & X-ray program. *SpineLine™*, the clinical and news magazine for spine care professionals, has a dedicated patient safety column in each issue. Enjoy a few of them here! See the new *Patient Safety 101* PowerPoint® presentation, which teaches the basic tenets of patient safety. A variety of other patient safety information will also be available, including the "Natural = Safe" herbal supplement program, Spine Safety Alerts and patient education brochures.

### RESEARCH

Available only in Chicago! Get a surprise NASS gift when you contribute to either of the NASS research funds at

the Research booth.

NASS is a leading force in promoting and supporting spine research. NASS' efforts enhance the body of knowledge of spine care through: research grant and fellowship funding; research studies; research and educational resources and collaboration with other organizations. Come see what we can do for you and your patients! The display will include National Complications Data Registry, Spine Surgery Research Study, Spine Research Foundation, Annual Research Fund, research grant/fellowship application, past funded studies and many other resources!

### HONOR ROLL OF DONORS

NASS' Honor Roll of Donors acknowledges the leadership and generosity of those who contributed to the advancement of spine care through NASS research funds.

### ADVOCACY

The National Association of Spine Specialists unites providers, patients and industry to advocate for the best legislative and regulatory environment for quality spine care. Connected to NASS6 is SpinePAC, a fund supported by NASS members and employees of member companies, to help promote NASS' message of sound public health care policy in the Halls of Congress.

### SPINEPAC BOOTH-FIX THE FORMULA

Get a Spine! Spine PAC, National Association of Spine Specialists, Medicare Reimbursement, Professional Liability Insurance matters... Join your spine care colleagues in protecting and expanding access to spine care through sound public health care policy. Help reclaim the physician's role as the guardian of health care. Stop by the Get a Spine! booth today and let's do together what we cannot do alone.

## Transportation and Travel Tips for Chicago

### SHUTTLE SERVICES

NASS will provide shuttle services between the hotels (with the exception of the Hyatt Regency McCormick which is attached to the convention center) during the Annual Meeting Monday through Saturday. The schedule will be posted in the lobbies of each hotel. Shuttle transportation to the Annual Banquet will be provided for guests staying at the Hyatt Regency McCormick to the InterContinental Chicago.

### GROUND

#### TRANSPORTATION TO HOTELS FROM AIRPORTS

**Continental Airport Express** provides shuttle service from O'Hare and Midway Airports to hotels in downtown Chicago. If you have questions, please call (888) 284-3826 or visit [www.airportexpress.com](http://www.airportexpress.com).

■ *From Chicago Midway Airport:* cost is \$16.00 per person one way and \$30 per person round trip. A discount is available for two or more people going to the same hotel. The

shuttle leaves every 15 minutes for all hotels in downtown Chicago; last shuttle leaves at 10:30 PM.

The Airport Express ticket counter is located at door 3, lower level across from baggage claim. No advanced reservations are required unless you need special assistance. Prices are subject to change.

■ *From O'Hare International Airport:* cost is \$21 per person one way and \$39 per person round trip. A discount is available if there are two or more

people going to the same hotel. The shuttle leaves O'Hare every 10-15 minutes for all hotels in downtown Chicago; last shuttle leaves O'Hare at 11:30 PM.

The Airport Express ticket counter is located in the terminals at Door 1E, Door 2D and Door 3E across from baggage claim on the Baggage Claim level. Reservations are recommended especially if you require special services. Prices are subject to change.



**PDA SHOW GUIDE**

The Final Program is accessible at your fingertips by downloading it onto your Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) at the beaming stations located near the registration area or at the Zimmer Spine booth in the Exhibit Hall.

Support made possible through an educational grant from Zimmer Spine.

**ANNUAL MEETING PROGRAM MATERIALS AVAILABLE ON CD-ROM**

Each registrant will receive a copy of the Annual Meeting Program on a CD-ROM featuring more than 100 oral presentations and 8 symposia. This CD-ROM will be mailed to you after the conference as a supplement detailing the latest information received at the meeting utilizing one comprehensive source. Each session will feature the speaker's slide and audio presentation.

**TRAVEL TIPS . . . CONTINUED**

**TAXI SERVICES**

Taxis are available at Chicago Midway Airport and O'Hare International to downtown hotels. A taxi will bring you directly to your preferred destination. The cost is approximately \$30-\$35 each way from O'Hare Airport and \$20 - \$25 each way from Chicago Midway .

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) offers fast, direct train

**Member Services Available On-Site in Chicago**  
**Get Information, Publications, Products and More**

**MEMBER SERVICES**

Be sure to visit the Member Services Area located outside the Exhibit Hall in 354a of the Lakeside Center. NASS staff members are present to answer questions about the membership application process and benefits. Various publications are available for viewing and purchase, as well as NASS logo items including teddy bears and lapel pins. Hours are:

Wednesday.... 6:30 am-5:00 pm  
 Thursday..... 6:30 am-5:00 pm  
 Friday..... 7:00 am-5:00 pm  
 Saturday..... 7:30 am-1:00 pm

**NASS JOB CONNECTION**

Connecting employers and candidates just got easier. Through the *NASS Job Connection*, NASS' on-line job recruitment service, job seekers can search by specialty or by geographic location free of charge. Employers can post

positions for a nominal fee. For more information, stop by Member Services, visit [www.spine.org](http://www.spine.org) or call (888) 884-8242.

**CYBER CAFÉ**

Keep in touch with your office while at the conference. Visit our Cyber Café located in the Member Services area. Several computers are available with Internet access to check your e-mail.

**NASS MEMBERSHIP**

Staff will be available to assist you in checking on your current membership status, updating your contact information, paying your dues or if you aren't a member, providing you with an application and more information about the many benefits NASS has to offer.

**SPINE HEALTH**

See the Spine Health Trilogy DVD before buying one for

your office. The compilation of NASS' award winning patient education videos and video news releases from the 2002, 2003 and 2004 Spine Health Campaigns is a valuable resource to both doctors and patients and covers topics such as patient safety, osteoporosis and artificial disc replacement. Look for a new volume every three years.

**NASS STORE**

Don't go home without a little gift for yourself, family or staff. Choose among NASS logo t-shirts, baseball caps, coffee mugs, ties and other unique spine items. No room in your luggage? We'll ship it to your home or office!

**MESSAGE CENTER**

Looking for someone? Attendees may leave a quick note for colleagues on a bulletin board in the Member Services area between Wednesday and Friday afternoon.

service from both airports to downtown, convenient bus and train lines to major attractions, simple fare cards, easy-to-use maps and brochures and custom trip planning for groups. For route, fare and schedule information, call (312) 836-7000 every day from 5:00 AM-1:00 AM (CT). The CTA system map and Downtown Sightseeing Guide are available at all train stations, both airports, visitor information centers and hotels. You can also plan your trip on

line by visiting [www.transitchicago.com](http://www.transitchicago.com) or by calling 1 (888) YOURCTA. The fare for one ride is \$1.75 for ages 12 and up. You can take two additional trips in the next two hours for the cost of a transfer (\$0.25).

**SAFETY TIPS**

Chicago is a beautiful city full of great sites and attractions. As with all cities, remember to walk in public areas, do not walk alone on streets where

there is no visible light or pedestrians. Be sure to keep purses or wallets out of sight and remove name badges when not in the Convention Center. If you are in need of assistance, any NASS or uniformed Convention Center personnel with a two-way radio can also assist you. For an immediate emergency outside of the Convention Center and hotels, please dial 911.



# NASS Award Winners

## Research Grants and Fellowships

The NASS Research Project Management Committee received 48 proposals for research grants, two proposals for clinical traveling fellowships and four proposals for research traveling fellowships this year.

The Committee is pleased to award grants and fellowships totaling over \$200,000 to the following recipients in 2004:

### *Developmental Therapeutic*

#### *Strategy for Disc Abnormalities in a Mouse Model*

Principal Investigator: Xudong Li, MD, PhD  
Award: \$99,998

#### *Effects of Spine Surgery on Paraspinal Musculature*

Principal Investigator: Richard G. Fessler, MD, PhD  
Award: \$50,000

#### *Prospective Cohort Study of the COMT val 158 met*

#### *Genotype and Outcome from Surgery for Degenerative Disc Disease*

Principal Investigator: David H. Kim, MD  
Award: \$27,655

#### *Clinical Traveling Fellowship*

Francis H. Shen, MD  
Award: \$4,900

#### *Research Traveling Fellowship*

Gianluca Vadala, MD  
Award: \$18,000

## Annual Meeting Resident Travel Scholarships

The NASS Resident & Fellow Education Committee would like to congratulate the following individuals who were selected to receive a \$2,600 travel scholarship to attend the NASS 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting. These young physicians will be recognized at the awards presentation during the Annual Meeting on Friday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. Please join us in congratulating these

outstanding residents!

**Michael W. Peelle, MD**  
from Washington University Medical School, St. Louis, MO

**Christopher D. VanPelt, MD**  
from Michigan State University College of Human Medicine, Flint, MI

**Willis W. Stevenson, III, MD**  
from Northeastern Ohio

Universities College of Medicine, Akron, OH

**Jonathon R. Stieber, MD**  
from Monmouth Medical Center, Long Branch, NJ

*NASS would like to extend appreciation to Aesculap for their generous contribution to the Resident Travel Scholarship Program.*

## 2003 NASS Recognition Awards

NASS is pleased to announce the following winners of NASS Recognition Awards. These awards will be presented at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Chicago during the awards presentation Friday, October 29<sup>th</sup>. Listed below are correct descriptions of NASS Recognition Awards which were printed incorrectly in the 2003 Annual Report.

**Steven Garfin, MD** will be honored with the David Selby Award for outstanding contributions to the art and science of spinal disorder management through service to NASS.

**Scott Boden, MD** is this year's recipient of the Leon Wiltse Award in recognition of his excellence in leadership and/or research in the field of spine surgery.

**Bryan Cunningham, MSC**, will receive the Henry Farfan Award for his outstanding contributions to the field of spine care, especially in biomechanics or nonoperative spine care.

## Annual Meeting Attendee Hotels

**Looking for colleagues? NASS meeting attendees are staying at the following Chicago hotels:**

- **InterContinental Chicago**  
505 North Michigan Avenue  
(312) 944-4100
- **Hard Rock Hotel Chicago**  
230 North Michigan Avenue  
(312) 345-1000
- **Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers**  
301 East North Water Street  
(312) 464-1000
- **The Fairmont Chicago**  
200 North Columbus Drive  
(312) 565-8000
- **Hyatt Regency Chicago**  
151 East Wacker Drive  
(312) 565-1234
- **Hyatt Regency McCormick**  
2233 S. Martin Luther King Drive  
(312) 567-1234
- **Swissotel Chicago**  
323 East Wacker Drive  
(312) 565-0565

### *In Memoriam*

Charles G. Kalko, MD  
Edison, NJ



# NASS Partners with SFMatch to Provide Matching Services

## New Dates Established for 2006 Spine Surgery Match

**By F. Todd Wetzel, MD**  
Chair, Resident and Fellow Education Committee

The Spine Match has been beset with compliance difficulties during the three years of its existence predominantly because of loose participation by several programs as well as numerous spots offered outside the match.

The decision to move to the San Francisco Match was motivated by our failure to reach NMRP compliance thresholds. The preliminary decision of the Resident and Fellow Education Committee to move dates up was to make the match more equitable and minimize loss of applicants from the match due to spots offered externally. Moving the date farther back from the previous date in January was felt to represent a significant risk for decreasing the applicant pool. This obviously would further endanger the stability of the match.

It is in the decision of the NASS Board, as executed by this Committee, to offer the match as a voluntary service. Currently, there are no sanctions associated with match violations, although these were discussed at the initial Program Directors Meeting. Additionally, there are no performance targets to hit with the San Francisco match.

In order to improve

the match and maintain fairness both for programs and applicants, it will be necessary for each and every program participating in the match to enter all spine fellowship positions in the match each and every year with absolutely no offers being made 'under the table.' This is now mandated by the NASS Board of Directors and will be expected of each program participating in the match from this point forward.

In the spring of 2005 the Spine Fellowship Directory will no longer list nonmatch participating programs. In order for fellowship programs to be listed in the NASS Directory, they will need to participate in the 2006 Spine Surgery Fellowship Match. By registering for the match, programs will have unique recognition as a Program of Excellence.

### OPEN FORUM AT ANNUAL MEETING

If you are a Fellowship Program Director, please plan to attend an open forum during the NASS 19th Annual Meeting, Thursday, October 28 from 3:30 – 5:00 PM in room 258 of the McCormick Place Lakeside Center in Chicago, IL. This meeting will precede the Annual Resident, Fellow and Program Director's Reception.

We would like to invite all Residents, Fellows and

Program Directors to attend the Annual Resident, Fellow and Program Directors Reception immediately following the Program Director's meeting. The reception will take place in room 253b at the McCormick Place, Lakeside Center, Chicago, IL, on Thursday, October 28, from 5-7 PM. Please join us for a time of networking while we unwind with beverages and light hors d'oeuvres.

### MATCH DATES FOR THE 2006 PGY SPINE SURGERY FELLOWSHIP MATCH

- January 1, 2005 – Programs and applicants begin submitting their rank-ordered preference lists.
- January 17, 2005 – All rank lists must be submitted by 12:00 PM (PT).
- January 25, 2005 – Match day
- February 1, 2005 – All applicants who do not yet know their results may call SFMatch to receive the information directly.

If you are an applicant or fellowship program director and have questions on how to register for the Spine Match, please visit the SF Match, Web site at [www.sfmatch.org](http://www.sfmatch.org) or call (415) 447-0350.

## NASS Calendar At a Glance

For further details about these NASS meetings and/or to download a registration form, please visit [www.spine.org](http://www.spine.org) or call NASS toll-free at: (877) SpineDr

### January 2005

- 13-16 Board Meeting, St. Helena, CA
- 21-22 Cervical Fixation, Rosemont, IL
- 28-29 Coding Update, Olympic Valley, CA

### February 2005

- 18-19 Lumbar Spinal Injections, Rosemont, IL

### March 2005

- 4-5 Minimally Invasive Approaches & Techniques to the Lumbar Spine, Rosemont, IL

### April 2005

- 1-2 Coding Course New Orleans, LA
- 6-9 Spring Break 2005 - Spring into Motion, Bal Harbour, FL

### June 2005

- 10-11 Managing Complications in Spine Surgery, Boulder, CO
- 24-25 Lumbar Spinal Injections, Memphis, TN

### September 2005

- 27-Oct.1 20th Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA

# TSJ Publishes Special Issue on Disc Arthroplasty

## By Todd J. Albert, MD and John P. Kostuik, MD

With the explosion of technology in disc replacement for the cervical and lumbar spine as well as other technologies related to spinal motion sparing, we have attempted to gather an international group of experts to share their philosophies and approaches to these new technologies for a Special Edition of *The Spine Journal*. This edition will be constructed in five sections and 32 chapters. The introduction section includes a range of articles from a background on the history and evolution of disc replacement to the rationalization for implantation of a mechanical disc. We have also included chapters attempting to classify lumbar disc degeneration as a nomenclature to discuss results based on the severity of patient disease is extremely important. The use of spinal fusion (the current gold standard) in the treatment of degenerative disc disease is also reviewed.

Our colleagues who perform hip and knee replacement have gone through multiple iterations of technology within their field and are at or near the maximum extent of knowledge relative to that which is needed to obtain excellent outcomes in joint arthroplasty. A chapter on lessons learned from total joint arthroplasty so as not to repeat some of the mistakes is also included in this introductory segment. The theoretical advantage of total disc replacement is to prevent adjacent segment degeneration/disease (ASD). Therefore, a chapter on the scientific basis of and the potential for ASD after fusion or in the native spine is included. Finally, predictions of the impact of disc arthroplasty on surgeon practices is discussed.

Dr. Casey Lee has edited a second section on biomechanical issues pertinent for disc replacement. Included in this section are basics of the mechanics and physiology of both the normal and degenerative disc, design concepts for total disc arthroplasty, as well as basic science

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**Our colleagues who perform hip and knee replacement have gone through multiple iterations of technology within their field and are at or near the maximum extent of knowledge relative to that which is needed to obtain excellent outcomes in joint arthroplasty.**

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considerations in disc arthroplasty. Finally, in this section discussion of the material considerations important in disc arthroplasty and the issue of wear debris are explored.

The experience with available disc prostheses is included in Section III. We can learn much from challenges and successes that have been faced through design and implementation of certain disc prostheses. A discussion of the Acroflex (Depuy Spine, Raynam, MA) prosthesis is helpful in this way. Furthermore, the evolution of the Charite prosthesis (Depuy Spine, Raynam, MA) represents the largest experience in disc arthroplasty to date and is also discussed in this chapter. Other disc designs discussed specifically are the Pro Disc (Synthes Spine, Paoli, PA), the Maverick (Medtronic Sofamor Danek, Memphis, TN), and Flexicore (Spinecor, Summit, N.J). Finally, a chapter on complications and revision strategies is also included, as downside risk at least has to be contemplated as we embark on any new technology.

Section IV is devoted to cervical disc replacement. The goals are discussed, as are concepts important in choosing a cervical disc replacement and in the development/design of a cervical disc replacement. Three disc replacements where international experience has been gained thus far are discussed as well: the

Bryan (Medtronic Sofamor Danek, Memphis, TN), the Prestige Disc (Medtronic Sofamor Danek, Memphis, TN) and the PCM (Cervitech, Parsippany, N.J) Discs are all reviewed including their early clinical results.

The final section in this Special Edition includes review of future options and options still only theoretical for the treatment of disc degeneration. This section includes discussion of other motion preservation technologies such as hydrogels. Basic science work done using growth factors to prevent and reverse disc degeneration, the use of gene therapy, and the potential for repair of the degenerated disc and stem cell regeneration all are discussed in this section.

We are extremely excited for the release of this special edition of *The Spine Journal* and hope you enjoy it as much as we have putting it together.

*The Spine Journal*, the official journal of the North American Spine Society, is an international and multidisciplinary journal that publishes original, peer-reviewed articles on research and treatment related to the spine and spine care, including basic science and clinical investigations. It is a condition of publication that manuscripts submitted to *The Spine Journal* have not been published, and will not be simultaneously submitted or published elsewhere.

*The Spine Journal* is published six times a year and is provided as a benefit of membership to members of the North American Spine Society. Nonmember subscriptions are available: \$237 to institutions; \$106 to individuals.

For more information about *The Spine Journal*, please visit the Elsevier Web site at [www.elsevier.com](http://www.elsevier.com)



# Diary of a SCRUBBs Journey

By Laura Scott Wade

NASS Senior Manager of Professional Practice

It is mid July in Santo Domingo. A stray dog lingers at the entrance to the hospital while cars lacking mufflers speed by on the busy street. The sun bakes the sidewalks along with the candy vendors and shoe shiners that occupy it. The operating room is silent in comparison and much warmer than it should be, but the beads of sweat forming on the foreheads of the assembled are from anxiety more than the heat. Carmela\* has not yet awoken from her halothane-induced sleep. Her face is slack, as if free from worry for the first time in years; she is ethereal, angelic. The anesthesiologist breaks the silence, slapping her face and yelling, “*ábrase los ojos, Carmelita!*”

The next day, Rosa takes her place on the operating table and her spine is coaxed from its contortion by a rollercoaster of rods and screws. The senior surgeon calls his one-time fellow in from the OR next door to take photos and to get a glimpse of an almost-once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: Rosa has two spinal cords. (Earlier, we had marveled at her X-ray films: in one, the two holes in each of her vertebrae make her spine look like a row of Mardi Gras masks.) After several rounds of close-ups taken by seven digital cameras, Dr. Thomas Errico laughs, “Okay, gang, nothin’ to see here, back to work, *vamos!*” The crowd disperses, laughing, and onlookers share photos to a chorus of appreciative *oohs* and *ahhs* in the break room. Dr. Andrew Moulton scrubs back in and returns to his own patient, who is being opened by the Dominican orthopedic surgeon he will train on this procedure. The room is again quiet except for the machinery — *click-beep-hiss* — and the faint sound of merengue music wafting in from the other room.

We are here on behalf of Fundación Mariposa (The Butterfly Foundation), an organization founded by Dr. Moulton and his wife, Geraldine Collado, to help children with spine disorders in the Dominican Republic and other South American countries. This is Dr. Errico’s fifth trip for the Foundation — he loves the feeling he gets from helping these kids and he plans to continue to go on as many of these trips as his already-jam-packed schedule will allow. The basic format of each visit is a too-brief Tuesday-to-Sunday schedule, with a clinic the first day in which the surgeons review candidates and pick the children that are most in need of immediate attention. Amazingly, these children have no hint of the “why me?” syndrome so often exhibited in more privileged societies. They confront their poverty and their seemingly hopeless medical situation with equanimity and, often, joy. Some of them are intensely shy, made so by the shame they feel regarding their deformity as seen by

other, “normal” children, but even the shyest are quick to smile. The chances of being chosen for surgery are slim, as there is only enough time for 12 patients per trip: two a day per doctor for three days. We only bring two doctors because there are only two operating rooms in the entire hospital.

Rosa—the patient with two spinal cords—is Dr. Errico’s case, his fifth in three days. She is his only patient today—bringing this trip’s total down to eleven—because her deformity is so complicated, and we assume we are in for a long haul. We’re wrong. Dr. Errico is lightning-fast and almost frighteningly steady-handed, with a wit as sharp as his scalpel. He never stops moving—his mind works ahead of his hands, plotting his strategy far ahead, like Bobby Fischer in a championship chess match. There are no wasted movements. Watching him is like watching a master practitioner of *tai chi*.

Dr. Moulton—whose dedication, drive and kindness of spirit made this trip and the ones that have preceded it happen—operates in the room next door. Dr. Moulton is bookish and bespectacled, with a quiet dignity and an easy, sheepish smile. We call him Clark Kent. To these kids, he is Superman. He converses easily in Spanish with his anesthesiologist and with Dr. Rosario, the orthopedic surgeon he is training to do these procedures (Fundación Mariposa operates on the “teach a man to fish” philosophy, in the hope that training more spine surgeons will increase the chances for many of these kids whose cases aren’t severe enough to warrant the limited time granted by visiting doctors).

Moulton lucked out by inadvertently getting the room with better air conditioning—there is a 20° difference between his room and Errico’s. Both rooms, however, suffer occasional blackouts. When the lights go out, the figures in the room are lit only by the faint glow from the orange readout on the life support system, which has its own battery. Everyone freezes. The scrub team hold their hands aloft. An eerie calm descends upon the room. We wait. After two minutes, the building’s generator kicks in with a *vroom* and the room bounces back into brightly-lit activity. If you are in Dr. Moulton’s OR when this happens, this event is accompanied by a surge of festive Dominican music coming from the anesthesiologist’s boom box, which is situated on the floor next to a cardboard box full of medical supplies. You wouldn’t guess it, but we are in the newest hospital in Santo Domingo, carved by CURE International from an old apartment building. It was finished this year and is state-of-the-art by Dominican standards; by United States standards, it is stuck in the 1950s.



Dr. Errico between surgeries.

Despite our surroundings, our cases are staffed by an exceptional group of nurses led by Sandra Henriquez, a stern, beautiful drill sergeant who somehow keeps afloat an incredibly tight ship despite having to cut corners at every turn. Her nurses must re-use scrub pads three times before they throw them away; items that are designed to be disposable are rinsed and run through the autoclave; instruments are sterilized while wrapped in two layers of surgical draping and labeled with masking tape. This sort of recycling is not unsafe, but it is not what we are used to in the US, where everything is vacuum-packed in disposable containers. At one point, I overhear two nurses clucking at us from the corner, lamenting at how waste-

ful we are. We throw everything away after the first use. Sandra Henriquez orders the nurses to guard the trashcans so we don't waste her supplies. Each night, she does a meticulous inventory of the discarded packaging.

The sterile field is sacred here, yes, but the periphery is chaotic. At one point, a line of tiny ants crawls across the table. Patients are wheeled up to surgery either much too early or without their radiographs. "¿Dónde están las radiografías," we ask the nurse from the first floor, "...las placas?" A mad search ensues. The films are found shoved under the feet of a random patient asleep in the ICU upstairs. It is a symptom of the chaos: their system of organization is thrown a bit by our presence, as any hospital would be by the presence of two surgical teams who don't speak the native language. They compensate amazingly well. Their professionalism is impressive. They come in overtime on Saturday to help with the last case.

Amid the hustle and bustle, the patient is often left alone to worry in the hallway outside the OR. The hospital simply doesn't have the square footage to designate a pre-op area or a waiting room for the families. Those of us who will observe the surgeries attempt to distract and entertain the kids as they wait. My Spanish is about as good as the children's English, so our exchanges are mostly hopelessly garbled, but we crack each other up with our hand signals and bad conjugations. Occasionally, I see a look of worry flicker across a child's face. Sometimes they cry. When Carmela



**An international labor of love.** Left to right: US surgeon Dr. Andrew Moulton, Dominican orthopedic surgeon Dr. Eric Rosario and Canadian scrub nurse Keri George.

of encouragement they can't understand. They remember and ask for him when they wake up, groggily requesting, "*Quiero Steve. Por favor, quiero Steve.*"

This trip marks the first time the team has been able to bring a neurophysiologist. Although neural monitoring is the standard of care in the US, it is almost unheard of here. Jonathan Matzko (who is also, thankfully, fluent in Spanish) attaches a rainbow of tiny braided wires to each patient before surgery begins, and explains to me the readout on his laptop screen. Because there are two surgeries at once and only one neurophysiologist, the surgeons choose which case is the most severe with the most risk of injury and assign Jonathan to that room. In at least one case, his presence saves the day: at two in the morning, right at the end of a complicated correction that has taken seven hours so far, Jonathan alerts the surgeon that he has lost the signal. Dr. Moulton carefully relaxes the positioning of the spine into a less strict correction and they wait thirty minutes or so. The signal returns. Without Jonathan's monitoring, the patient might have been at risk of paralysis.

Keri George is Dr. Errico's scrub nurse. She has traveled all the way from her home in Canada to participate on this trip. She assures me that, although conditions here may seem primitive, she's seen worse. She has been volunteering her skills for relief organizations for over 10 years, often full-time. Without a lick of Spanish in her vocabulary, she communicates with



**Before and after** coaxing a child's spine toward correction. This patient was one of 11 who was treated during the SCRUBBs trip to the Dominican Republic in July 2004.



the children before and after their surgeries. They smile as she approaches, their gazes flickering to the long blonde hair peeking out from under her surgical cap. She is their best advocate, and they understand this and trust her implicitly. Keri asks me to translate for her what little I can discern from their conversations and the replies of the nurses. She pressures the floor nurses to give her patients more medication for their pain. “No tenemos injection,” they tell her, “solamente Tylenol.” Keri grimaces and then she turns and holds her patient’s hand with an encouraging smile.

Coordinating all of these volunteers and organizations is Carmen Bartholomew, The Butterfly Foundation’s de facto Director—it is a full-time, unpaid position for her and she loves it. Dr. Moulton is her son, and you can see where he gets his gentle nature and kind heart. Work like this is a natural extension of their personalities. Of our group, Carmen raised only Andrew, but she is honorary mother to everything here: provider of encouragement, mother of invention, the beloved matriarch who gracefully accomplishes the impossible every day. We call her Madame Butterfly.

The surgeries end late at night. We, the “unscrubbed,” stay two hours with the reps—Eric Klebbers and Travis Clarke—to wash the blood and tissue from 20 trays of instruments on loan from Medtronic so they can all be autoclaved in time for the next day’s cases. Instead of going home to rest for the next day’s 14 hours of surgery as she should, Keri won’t take no for an answer and stays to help as well. There is no air conditioning outside of the ORs, and our sweaty scrubs are hanging on us, soaked with bloody dishwater. It’s the best time I’ve had at work in a long time. Travis and Eric are exhilarated by having scrubbed in for the first time on this trip. They are young and enthusiastic and exchange animated stories of the goings-on in their separate ORs like color commentators for a football game. They love what they do. On this trip, everyone seems to.

Back in the OR the next day, we wait together for Carmela to wake up. Carlos slaps her cheeks, pinches her side. Dr. Errico pinches her toes. The Dominican nurses gather, cooing Carmela’s name: “*Carmelita, bonita,*



NASS staffer Laura Scott Wade at the side of a postop patient.

*ábrase los ojos....”* We wait. *Esperamos.* Carmela starts to grimace and emits soft moans. Still, her feet have not moved. Even the uninitiated can read on the faces of the professionals in the room that this milestone is obviously overdue. Others slowly enter the room, one by one, whispering, “how’s she doing?” in both languages. Soon, Carmela is surrounded by 12 people, all watching for any sign of motor activity. A finger twitches. One eye opens. The entire room holds its breath. Carlos tells Carmela to move her legs. He is worried now, and his tone is harsh and demanding: “¡Carmela! ¡Ahora! ¡Muévase los piernas!”

There is a pause. No one breathes. Suddenly, a foot moves and the room explodes with whoops of joy. The Dominican nurses—*las enfermeras*—pound the gurney next to Carmela’s head with their open palms in celebration. We laugh the deep belly laugh of a great tension relieved. She’s okay. A nurse hugs

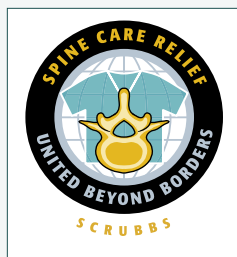
me and nearly crushes my ribs. We laugh and kiss each other on the cheek. She removes her mask, throws it in the air like a graduation cap and begins singing as she leaves the room. Sandra, the formidable head nurse, finally lets her guard down and smiles at me. “*Gloria al Dios,*” she says quietly.

Carmela’s deformity has been corrected beyond recognition. We are amazed that her before and after x-ray films can be from the same person. Dr. Errico and Dr. Moulton will monitor her progress on future trips to perform corrections on those they didn’t have time for on this trip. How well and how quickly she and the others will mend remains to be seen. Until then, *esperamos.* We wait.

**To learn more** about Fundación Mariposa, please visit their web site at [www.fundacionmariposadr.com](http://www.fundacionmariposadr.com). To find out how you can become involved in NASS’ new, similar philanthropic initiative, SCRUBBs (Spine Care Relief United Beyond Borders), please e-mail [SCRUBBs@spine.org](mailto:SCRUBBs@spine.org).

\* To protect their confidentiality, all patients’ names have been changed.

## Calling All Volunteers!



Always wanted to give something back but never had the opportunity?

The North American Spine Society has embarked on a new initiative, SCRUBBs (Spine Care Relief United Beyond Borders), which will bring much-needed medical attention to spine patients worldwide through sponsoring medical mission trips, organizing NASS volunteers to

donate their time in surgery, coordinating donations of supplies and equipment, and granting funds to existing relief organizations.

This new program is already under way! An informational

and brainstorming session will be held at the Annual Meeting on Wednesday, October 27th, from 4:00-5:00 pm in Room 253b. Meet with NASS member Dr. Andrew Moulton, founder of Fundación Mariposa and Chair of the SCRUBBs program, and find out how you can be a part of this exciting adventure!

Bring your experience, fresh ideas and energy to help us expand our horizons and continue our mission to advance quality spine care through education, research and advocacy. You can read more about the SCRUBBs program in Dr. Errico’s President’s Message in the March/April 2004 issue of SpineLine. If you have questions, please contact Laura Scott Wade, Senior Manager of Professional Practice, at [wade@spine.org](mailto:wade@spine.org).