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FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

What Have You Done for Me Lately?

As I look back on the past year as the 21st President of the North American Spine Society, I am amazed by all the different issues that arise, almost on a daily basis, that affect our organization, our members and ultimately our patients. The many issues that arise usually need to be dealt with in quick order. I am convinced that none of these many accomplishments could occur without an outstanding staff and dedicated, volunteer physicians. When people ask me what NASS has done over the last year, I usually say I am not sure I have enough time to answer the question appropriately. Nevertheless, I will try to answer that question in this, my last, Presidential Message. So what exactly has NASS done for our members lately...

Research Grants and Fellowship Awards

Michael Heggeness, MD, has led the Research Council with the administrative help of the Research Department staff under the oversight of Pam Hayden. Over \$200,000 has been awarded to five different members for clinical traveling fellowships and research grants.

Clinical Care

The Clinical Care Council has made a huge leap forward in integrating evidenced based medicine into NASS programs through training, publications, etc, under the leadership of Council Chair Jerome Schofferman, MD, with the help of Director Pam Hayden and the clinical care staff. The Council convened a meeting with 10 other specialty groups to develop common

clinical guidelines which will ultimately be used to develop performance measures. Evidence analysis training has been offered to members who will be actively involved in developing spine guidelines.

Education

Ken Burkus, MD, and Ray Baker, MD, have served as the Co-Chairs of the Education Council and along with Education Department staff led by Christina Wolf, have been extremely active. Besides the annual meeting, five other major courses were held this year including two lumbar spinal injection courses, Spring Break, Spine Across the Sea with the Japanese Spine Research Society, and the Korean American Spine Society Inaugural meeting.

Meeting Services staff have been immensely helpful in logistics for all of these offerings under the oversight of new Director Nancy Olson.

Members Services

Under the leadership of Member Services Council Chair Stuart Weinstein, MD, with help from the member services staff, the NASS membership has grown to 4,397. We received more than 350 new applications for membership this year and only 12 members submitted requests for resignation.

Guided by the Council's Publications Oversight Committee and carried out by Publications Department staff, NASS' publishing program has grown to include two periodicals, 17 *Contemporary Concepts*, four CME Case Studies, 14 books, nine CD-ROMs, 31 brochures and approximately 500 Web pages.

SpineLine, under the leadership of Dr. Weinstein and the management of Pamela Towne (Director of Publications), has continued to provide high quality reviews, debates and special features. *The Spine Journal*, under the editorship of Charlie Branch and the staff assistance of Joy Kenyon, continues to receive increasing numbers of submissions of quality studies. Paul Bishop, DC, MD, PhD, replaces Scott Haldeman, DC, MD, PhD, as a Deputy Editor for Medical and Interventional Science for *The Spine Journal*.

The *Coding* book has been revised by the Coding Committee and the 2007 edition is now available. The *Compendium of Outcome Instruments* has also been revised by the Research Council and the new second edition debuted at the Annual Meeting in Seattle. A new publication developed by the Patient Safety Committee, *Navigating Nonherbal Dietary Supplements*, is also available. The exercise book, *The Couch Potato Workout: 101 Exercises You Can Do At Home*, also was published this year and is available for sale on the NASS Web site with a portion of the proceeds supporting NASS research. New patient education brochures for Spinal Cord Injury, Spinal Tumors and Spinal Infections are now available.

Public Education

NASS initiated several public relations campaigns under the direction of Public Education Council Chair Marjorie Eskay-Auerbach, MD, JD. With the help of new Marketing & Communications Director Frank Kocich, NASS generated substantial media coverage on pregnancy and back pain, preventing falls, driving safety, backpack safety and *The Couch Potato Workout* book.

Advocacy

Jeff Wise, MD, along with Jackie Kocinski and Advocacy Department staff, have led NASS' advocacy efforts. A new survey was distributed this year to assess

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members' key policy priorities. Julie Perry continues to work in Washington, DC as NASS' representative working mainly with the Alliance of Specialty Medicine, an organization representing 16 organizations and over 20,000 physicians. The group focuses on Medicare reform, professional liability reform and patient safety issues. The Advocacy department raised over \$60,000 for SpinePAC at the annual meeting.

Professional Practice

Led by Socioeconomic Affairs Council Co-Directors Greg Przybylski, MD, and Charlie Mick, MD, with help from Laura Wade and Professional Practice staff, NASS made significant strides in the area of professional practice. At the RUC meeting last fall, the seven spine related recommendations in which NASS was involved were accepted without comment or changes by the full RUC and were forwarded to CMS. Through the work of NASS physicians and other specialties, two surgical procedures that had been bundled for reimbursement were unbundled allowing increased reimbursement to our members.

Ethics

The Ethics Task Force, under the leadership of Stan Herring, MD, developed an extensive Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Policy for all members of the organization. Full disclosure is now the accepted standard for submission of papers, scientific studies for oral presentation and for serving on any and all committee or elected positions. The Ethics Task Force has also made recommendations to the Board for actions

against members who have breached NASS' ethical guidelines. Dr. Herring also chairs the Professional Conduct and Ethics Committee which has heard numerous cases as we strive to ensure ethical behavior among our members.

Spine Masters Institute

The planning and development for SMI has continued to move forward. Jim Finnerty was hired as the Manager of the SMI. Over \$4M has been raised from generous contributions from six industry partners (Medtronic, Stryker, Kyphon, Zimmer, Synthes and Blackstone). An audit committee has been formed under the direction of Bob Gatchel, PhD, to help oversee the funding and operation of the SMI. Fund-raising for the Institute is still actively underway. It is anticipated that the SMI will open in the spring of 2007 with courses already scheduled for next year. Several Administrative, Finance and other department staff contributed efforts to the SMI project under the overarching direction of Executive Director Eric Muehlbauer.

We still have much to accomplish. When we take a minute or two to reflect on the past (which, by the nature of how fast things are changing, is about all the time we have to reflect) we have to continue to grow, adapt to change and stay proactive for our members and their patients. We are part of a great organization. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your President. I am eternally grateful for all the hard work of all these dedicated physicians and staff members.