



Charles L. Branch, Jr, MD
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, NC

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Recognizing Value

As we embark on a new year with new leadership in our society and in our country, we have the opportunity to reflect on the meaning and purpose of our pursuits and to refocus our efforts. As the 24th President of the North American Spine Society, I am compelled to consider and to make every effort to enhance the value of our Society to its membership and to those they serve. As members of NASS and of our society as a whole, we must consider the value of the spine care that we provide.

In his July-August 2008 *SpineLine* message, Dr. Tom Faciszewski, NASS immediate Past President, reminds the reader of the critical role of VALUE in health care. In health care economics, and certainly in spine care, we are quickly moving into the age of comparative effectiveness. The compensation for spine and other health care will be increasingly linked to the value of that care. It is my opinion that, in this context, value and quality are synonymous. The core mission of NASS will be to foster the delivery of “valuable” spine care. Using the evidence-based platform to establish or recognize the value of spinal therapies has been and will continue to be a major focus of NASS.

Certain therapies have and will continue to be recognized as valuable; others will not and this will likely be contentious. Fair and appropriate compensation must be included in any model of care delivery. Reimbursement issues will be equally contentious and will remain at the center of the value debate. While NASS will lead this value effort, it will not succeed alone. Successful change to a more meaningful and sustainable system will require collaborative effort with related societies, with industry, with the public and with governmental regulators and payors. Success will require communication, negotiation and ultimately trust among all of the stakeholders, and a robust infrastructure in our society.

The leadership role for NASS is made credible by the efforts of volunteer members and staff who are dedicated to our mission. As I prepared a presentation on the value of NASS membership for the young spine surgeons course at the 2008 Annual Meeting, I was reminded of how critical dedicated volunteers are. But I was also reminded of the reality that in our Society, and I am certain in other societies, that many or most of the membership are served by a few! A small but dedicated Annual Meeting Program Committee prepares and delivers a meaningful program for thousands. A small but dedicated evidence gathering and analysis group develops the guidelines for spine care and evidence based rebuttals to CMS and others who seek to devalue the service we as a group provide. A small but dedicated staff of the North American Spine Society provides value to the membership that far exceeds the annual membership dues. During the past year, to make NASS a more nimble and valuable resource for spine care, we have focused on leadership reorganization. In this issue of *SpineLine*, I would like to recognize our true value—our NASS staff—and reinforce the value that they bring to all of us as we “foster the delivery of quality spine care.”

The Executive Director of NASS for over 14 years has been Eric Muehlbauer. His tenure in professional society management far exceeds the norm and indicates the great value that he brings to the NASS membership. He has shepherded NASS’ almost logarithmic growth over the past decade. The successful completion and transition to our new headquarters and training and education facility has been realized under his watchful oversight. Eric is responsible to the Board of Directors for the overall operations of NASS.

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NASS operations has recently been reorganized. The new management teams include:

■ **Marketing and Communications Division.** Deputy Director Frank Kocich will oversee the education, publishing and development activities of NASS.

Christina Wolf will continue as Director of Education Programming. With Senior Manager Jenni Edsell, Managers Colleen O'Brien and Karly Senesac, and Assistant Erica Taffs, this team will be responsible for the educational content of all NASS programs.

Pamela Towne will continue as Director of Education Publishing. Along with Pam, Publications Manager Kelly Dattilo and *TSJ* Managing Editor Robin Campbell will be responsible for NASS publications.

Jessica Vander Naald will continue in the division as our Graphic Designer.

Jim Finnerty will serve as Senior Manager of Spine Masters Institute, the learning facilities and training lab at NASS.

Nancy Good will serve as Manager of Development and Corporate Relations.

■ **Health Policy Division.** Deputy Director Dawn Brennaman will direct and coordinate the research and advocacy activities of NASS.

Pam Hayden will continue as Director of Research with responsibilities for evidence-based research efforts and guideline development along with Manager Belinda Duszynski and Assistant Manager Karen James.

Nick Schilligo, Senior Manager of Advocacy will oversee the Washington arm of NASS along with Allison Waxler and Kim Kuman, Managers of Health Policy.

■ **Business Operations Division.** Deputy Director Brad Repsold will oversee the Meeting Services, Web site and Membership business of NASS.

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Nancy Olson will continue as Director of Meeting Services. She will work with Senior Manager Jennifer Krasnac, Managers Jessica Castillo and Donna Woolsey, and Coordinator Danielle Sabbia to handle all NASS meetings from the specialty courses to the Annual Meeting.

Rick Bacon continues as Senior Manager of Exhibits and Event Architecture. He is assisted by Coordinator Cindy Tomala to manage exhibit hall activity at NASS meetings.

Brian Jones continues as the Membership Manager along with Coordinator Susan Balluff and Assistant Kristin Cash.

Tammy Bornheim will continue as Web Site and Special Projects Manager.

NASS headquarters office services will be handled by Rachel Wasson and the Network & AV Administrator is Michael Ryba.

■ **Executive Division.** Eric Muehlbauer will head up the administration and development team.

Marcia Becker, Director of Finance, is the newest member of the management team. She will be responsible for the control of NASS resources and finances. Assisting her will be Senior Staff Accountant Melissa Schipper, AP/AR Accountant Doris Blomberg and Accounting Assistant Grace Roberts. Mary Jo Stock serves as Office Manager, and Tom Looney and Tony Oliva handle building Engineer responsibilities.

Laura Wade will serve as Director of Section Development to oversee new sections in NASS and the management of ethics guidelines and policies.

Senior Manager Dana Rennie is responsible for NASS Human Resources.

Allison Pintauro is the Assistant to the Executive Director.

It is this group of dedicated NASS staff who provide the foundation of value of membership. It is the staff who are so often overlooked as we recognize our accomplishments and acknowledge others who have helped us advance our agenda. When you consider the great value of NASS membership, it is this group who insures that the culture of volunteerism and service among so many of our members is transformed into real benefits for our membership and their patients. Let them know how much you appreciate them and their work. Get to know them as team members. Send them an email, a note or call them to let them know how much you appreciate their service to our great society.

Recognizing value is recognizing the people who bring value to an organization or a mission. While our volunteer members are key to our efforts, it is this group of dedicated staff who truly add value to our mission.

To the staff of the North American Spine Society—thank you for all that you do to help us foster the delivery of quality spine care.