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FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Spine, Sex and Seattle!

This is the last Presidential message that I have the pleasure of writing for *SpineLine*. No, I will not discuss sex, but I included it in the title for 2 reasons: first, I believe that it got your attention; second, spine as well as Seattle can be sexy.

The past year has been extremely productive for NASS and I'd like to acknowledge some of the many highlights.

NASS implemented 6 new CME on-line courses that cover both clinical and administrative topics based on members' interests. These courses feature synchronized presentations, slides and electronic scratch paper for personal notes. They contain links to Web sites related to the course topics, posttest questions and access to on-line functions.

Under the capable guidance of Drs. Abitbol and Connolly, NASS created its first hands-on course — "Surgical Approach and Techniques for the Lumbar Spine." Our first 3 clinical guidelines — herniated disc, unremitting low back pain and spondylolisthesis — were published and submitted to the National Guidelines Clearinghouse. I extend many, many thanks to the Task Force on Clinical Guidelines headed by Drs. David Wong and Tom Mayer.

A 2-year campaign for patient safety was developed by NASS. The campaign will be launched with a symposium during the annual meeting in Seattle. Under the guidance of David Wong, the Patient Safety Task Force developed a patient safety brochure and a "Sign, Mark and X-ray" program to prevent wrong-site surgery.

Hal Matthews provided leadership to the CME Committee on new educational ideas that bridge the gap between the Annual Meeting Program and CME committees, assuring that NASS educational offerings are of the highest quality for our membership.

The first issue of *The Spine Journal*TM has been published. Tom Mayer and his deputy editors (Howard An, Charlie Branch, Neil Kahanovitz, Scott Haldeman and David Fardon) should be congratulated for this work.

Under Stuart Weinstein's leadership, *SpineLine* has become a valuable forum for clinical discussion and a superior resource to members for socioeconomic and political news and practice management advice.

Alexander Vaccaro, Chair of the Contemporary Concepts Committee, has revitalized the NASS publications series. In a short time, he has enabled updates of current *Contemporary Concepts in Spine Care* and impending publication of several new topics.

Robert Gatchel shepherded a comprehensive *Compendium of Outcome Instruments for Assessment and Research of Spinal Disorders* from inception to print. This tremendous amount of work has provided a one-stop resource for researchers and clinicians that will advance the science of medicine by promoting the study of patient outcomes.

The Publication Education Committee generated 6 new titles for the NASS Publication Education Series this year under the guidance and assistance of Joel Press and President-Elect Stan Herring. Rick Fessler assigned authors for the patient education brochure on cervical myelopathy and John Schaffer worked with medical illustrators at the Cleveland Clinic to provide graphics.

The NASS Web site has been redesigned by the Electronic Technology Committee, chaired by Stephen Hochschuler. With their help and with input from the hundreds of NASS members who responded to the Web site survey, the new www.spine.org site provides easy access to a much wider variety of services for NASS members, health care professionals and spine patients.

New or revised publications for 2001 include *2001 Common Coding Scenarios* edited by Tom Faciszewski and *Implementing a Compliance Program: A Guide for Individual & Small Group Physician Practices* by Frank Lagattuta and Michael Wolff.

A procedure note template resource guide on CD-ROM was developed by Steve Heim.

The Coding Update regional and Annual Meeting seminars continue to be presented under the guidance of Program Chairman Tom Faciszewski with the help of Greg Przybylski, Bernie Pfeifer, Michael Wolff and Frank Lagattuta.

Charles Mick continues to represent our organization on the AMA Practice/Expense Advisory Committee (PEAC). His recommendations to AMA/PEAC concerning multiple codes were accepted.

Under Dr. Mick's guidance, NASS is aggressively planning to collect survey data and to conduct a joint presentation with several associated specialty societies.

Under the leadership of Drs. Herkowitz and Gunnar Andersson, as well as with the help of Dennis Maiman, several research projects such as Complications Data Registry Pilot Testing and Spine Research Report and Funding Report were developed.

Back to Health Month (April 2001) was a resounding success. Promoted in both print and broadcast media, the campaign educated the public about the prevention and treatment of back pain. Baseball great and 2-time World Series MVP, Reggie Jackson, who had a spine injury and underwent successful rehabilitation, was featured in a NASS video release. Our thanks to Dr. Robert Watkins for arranging Reggie Jackson's participation. More than 25 fellow NASS members joined this public education effort, serving as NASS spokespersons. This national exposure generated more than 1,000 calls from the public to the administrative offices of NASS. Back to Health Month was successfully spearheaded by Stan Herring, First Vice President of the Board of Directors. Back to Health Day on Capitol Hill also was held in the early months of this year. Represent-

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tatives of NASS and Congress gathered to discuss health legislation and issues related to spine care.

Casey K. Lee developed special programs seeking leadership commitments and personal pledges for the next 3 years to increase the Annual Research Fund and the Spine Research Foundation, which will further stimulate research in spinal disorders.

It has been a busy and successful year, but the crown jewel of the year will be the annual meeting in Seattle.

Under the leadership of Dr. Curtis Dickman, the Program Committee has been working hard to incorporate new educational opportunities such as hands-on courses, allied health accreditation and expanding special interest group discussions to make the meeting a success.

The Scientific Program is fantastic and consists of multiple symposia, course presentations and papers. NASS is fortunate to have as its keynote speaker, Dr. Clair Francomano, Senior Investigator of Genetics, National Institute on Aging, who will speak about the Human Genome Project. Her genetic research has resulted in 126 publications and she has been the author of 43 original peer-reviewed articles in the last 5 years.

We are honored that our Presidential Guest Speaker will be E. Donnall Thomas, MD, the 1990 Nobel Laureate in Medicine, who was honored for his discoveries concerning organ and cell transplantation in the treatment of human disease. I'd like to offer my special thanks to Stan Herring for using his personal contact to help us secure this prestigious speaker.

The meeting will be held in the Washington State Convention and Trade Center with many great hotels within walking distance. What a great city for a meeting! Seattle excels in livability, with its mild cli-

mate; a full range of arts, cultural and sporting events; and an abundance of shops, restaurants and easy access to outdoor recreational activities. Popular attractions in Seattle include the Space Needle, the Pike Place Market, the Woodland Park Zoo, Tillicum Indian Village, Boeing and the Museum of Flight, the Seattle Aquarium and Pioneer Square.

Seattle is situated on the shores of 2 large lakes and Puget Sound is flanked by 2 major mountain ranges (the Olympics and the Cascades) with Mount Rainier in full view. Remote wilderness is less than an hour away. Nearby are the San Juan Islands, Pacific Ocean beaches and major rivers.

Although corporate Boeing is planning to move, the largest aircraft manufacturer in the world remains in the Puget Sound. The Boeing factory as well as the Space Museum is open to visitors. Microsoft, the world's leading personal computer software company, is one of 2,500 software development firms in the state of Washington.

A new addition to the entertainment arena is the Experience Music Project, an architecturally unique techno-museum designed by Frank Gehry and dedicated to the history and experience of popular music.

With all the wonderful attractions that Seattle has to offer, many of us will be "sleepless in Seattle."

The year has been good so far, primarily due to the hard work of the members of NASS, the individuals mentioned above and, of course, the main office in Chicago. It has been a pleasure to work with the staff in Chicago, which has grown and is extremely efficient and hard working under the capable leadership of Eric Muehlbauer.

Sayonara! See you in Seattle!