
JOINT SECTION ON DISORDERS OF THE SPINE AND PERIPHERAL NERVES

SPINE SECTION NEWSLETTER



*The American Association of Neurological Surgeons
and
Congress of Neurological Surgeons*



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Meeting Time

March 11-14th, 2009 is the Silver Anniversary (25th) of the AANS/CNS Joint Section Meeting on Disorders of the Spine and Peripheral Nerves. The "spine section" is the largest surgical spine society in the world and plays an important role in the development of, interpretation of, and utilization of scientific information regarding the surgical management of spinal disorders. The theme of this year's meeting is Evidence, Appraisal and Advocacy. The meeting will be held at the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa in Phoenix, Arizona.

As we head into this meeting, we note that spine surgery as a subspecialty faces special challenges. Spine surgeons strive to provide excellent patient care by using scientific and clinical knowledge. However, we find ourselves defending the benefit of spine surgery under increasingly strenuous examination by the media, government regulators and economists. Data derived from high profile studies such as the SPORT trials have been appropriated by the lay press and have been inappropriately used to denigrate the efficacy of surgical techniques.⁹ The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is shifting its focus from efficacy to cost effectiveness in medical care and in spine surgery in particular. The public's concern about the relationships between industry and healthcare has also put spine surgery back into the newspaper.¹ Recent congressional inquiries have focused the public's concern onto these relationships (Sunshine Act, Grassley et al, 2008).

Despite these challenges, spinal surgery continues to move forward at a breathtaking pace. We are moving beyond arthrodesis into arthroplasty. Recent developments for biologic disc replacement and dynamic stabilization reveal exciting new non-fusion possibilities for our patients. These new technologies and the focused application of current technologies have the potential to provide substantial improvements in the quality of our patient's lives.

However, it is clear that to be able to provide these treatments to our patients, we need to provide the evidence that the procedures we do and the devices we use are of benefit compared to competing strategies. There will continue to be a need for us to

study the outcomes and study the cost effectiveness of what we do.

In addition to the over 250 original scientific papers, invited platform presentations by world experts in spinal surgery, and multiple special courses, the plenary session will provide a forum for the open discussion of the relevant issues facing spine surgery as a specialty.

Highlights of the meeting include:

Dr. Paul C. McCormick will give a lecture entitled "The Nature and Use of Evidence in Spinal Surgery" as the Honored Guest and Meritorious Award Recipient for this meeting. Dr. McCormick has been heavily involved in critically studying the available evidence and advocating the use of outcomes based and cost-effectiveness based evidence in surgical decision-making. His contributions to the literature have been incredibly helpful for spine surgeons to make clinical decisions for their patients. (2-8, 10-13)

Scientific Session IV - Future Advocacy: CMS, the Spine and Spine Care in Alternative Health Systems. Dr. Steve Ondra, a key member of President Obama's transition team and a well known deformity surgeon will comment on the current and future state of affairs regarding health care delivery in the United States. Dr. Steve Phurrough, director of the coverage analysis group at the CMS, will give insights into how the CMS system works, where its directives come from, and how we can potentially have a voice in the process. We will also hear from representatives of other health care systems worldwide (US Military, Canada and Japan) and learn about the benefits and drawbacks of alternative health delivery systems.

A special presentation regarding the history of the section will be made by Dr. Stewart B. Dunsker. A special section will be added to our website, featuring interviews with past chairmen of the section describing the birth, evolution, tribulations, and triumphs of the section over the last 25 years.

These are just some examples of the excellent program that awaits you. See you in Phoenix!

Preliminary Meeting Program

A preliminary program can be obtained at this link:
www.cns.org/spine/2009/pdf/2009PrelimProgram.pdf

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