



SEPTEMBER 2006

THE MYELOGON
newsletter for the members of the American Society of Spine Radiology



FROM THE

PRESIDENT

Alyssa T. Watanabe, M.D.

The ASSR Executive Committee has many exciting plans in store for our growing membership. This is a summary of current projects:

THE FEBRUARY 22-25, 2007 ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM IN MARCO ISLAND, FLORIDA

First of all, plans for the *2007 Annual Symposium* in Marco Island, Florida are in full swing. The meeting will be held at the newly renovated Marco Island Marriott Resort Golf Club & Spa, which is a beachfront resort. Expect Southern Florida semi-tropical weather in the mid 80s during the meeting. This location was chosen due to its popularity with the membership, large amount of meeting space, costs, and outdoor activities. Hotel rooms in this region during high season are at a premium and the negotiated meeting room rate is quite favorable. Planned social events include a golf tournament, a tennis round robin tournament, family-oriented activities for kids, and an optional boat tour of the Everglades. Waverunners and deep-sea fishing are available for the adventurous!

The *2007 Annual Symposium* will include expanded programming such as computer-based tutorials and posters, opportunity to view video and DVD educational programs that are also available for purchase, and spinal intervention mini-courses. There will be vendor training courses including a c-arm torso course at the hotel on vertebroplasty. Many international and new speakers are being invited.

The popular *Breakfast and Learn* and *Lunch and Learn* lectures will again be offered. New devices will be introduced with much opportunity for learning and networking outside of the ballrooms. Lectures will include how to optimize 3T MRI of the spine and special focus sessions on cervical disk disease, peripheral nerves, and post-operative spine.

The Call for Abstracts deadline date has been moved up to **October 31, 2006**. Please visit our website, www.TheASSR.org for the form and submission instructions.

FUTURE CONFERENCES

The ASSR is researching the potential for joint collaborations with other societies as well as more cadaver training courses. We will keep you posted on these potential meeting plans evolve.

The *2008 Annual Symposium* will be held February 20–24 at the Renaissance Esmeralda Resort and Spa in Indian Wells, California.

The ASSR Meeting Planning Committee is researching future meeting sites. If you have suggestions for a particular resort or location, please send an email to the ASSR Business Manager, Ken Cammarata at kcammarata@asnr.org.

ASSR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION INITIATIVES

The ASSR has garnered significant corporate attention mainly due to our strong presence in spinal interventions. The Society membership includes many of the premier spinal interventional radiologists who are truly at the forefront of new technologies, teaching and research in spine. This is one of the reasons why some companies are now starting to donate unrestricted funds to our society. The ASSR now has both research and education committees to develop vehicles for disbursing new research grants to ASSR members and trainees as well as to develop educational media. In addition, these funds allow us to potentially further improve the quality and number of meetings for our members. Please check our website for updates.

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ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO SOCIETY DISCUSSED AT ACR 83RD ANNUAL MEETING

Jeffrey A. Stone, M.D., ACR Councilor

The American College of Radiology (ACR) held its 83rd Annual Meeting on May 20-25, 2006 in Washington, DC. Several important issues relevant to the ASSR were addressed at the meeting.

1. There was much discussion on the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) scheduled to take effect January 1, 2007. ACR analysis suggests that the cuts on imaging predominantly affecting radiologists will amount to nearly \$1.2 billion annually or \$6 billion over five years. The message taken to Capitol Hill on Wednesday was to repeal, or more likely delay the implementation of sections 5102 a-b. These affect the reimbursement for the Technical Components of radiological exams. Section 5102a results in a 50% total reduction in reimbursement for contiguous body parts (additional 25% reduction in 2007 added to 2006 25% reduction). Section 5102b caps reimbursement for the technical component to the lesser of the HOPPS (Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System based on charges, not actual cost and non-validated) or the Medicare Physician fee Schedule (RBRVS based system that incorporates cost) reimbursement rate for outpatient imaging. Section 5102 was a last-minute addition to the overall bill that passed in February of this year and there was no opportunity for hearings on these issues (as is typically the case). After the Capitol Hill visits on Wednesday, it appears likely that there will be a delay in implementing this section of the bill to allow for further discussion and evaluation of its impact on imaging access for Medicare beneficiaries.
2. The CAC session discussed the future of Pay for Performance as part of the agreement between the AMA and Medicare. Several radiology specific metrics are being developed and include: CT dose (measurement and dose reduction programs), Screening for contrast nephropathy and allergies, MRI safety, Mammography call backs/biopsy rates, Certification of technologists, and Surveillance of ionizing radiation producing equipment. These are still under development but CMS will receive recommendations in September 2006 with plans for initial implementation in March of 2007. Subspecialty societies will coordinate with the ACR to further develop these policies. Radiologist specific measures have yet to be developed. Further information is available at www.physicianconsortium.org. Medical specialty specific measures are being developed including back pain and the ASSR should play an active role in development of these policies.

The CAC requests a representative from each society to be appointed as a contact person for pay for performance (P4P).
3. The ACR Council passed three guidelines applicable to the ASSR. These were guidelines for the Performance of Adult Spine MRI, Performance of CT of the Spine and Practice Guidelines on Informed Consent for Image-Guided Procedures. These will be available in the newest update distributed to ACR members.
4. The ASSR Councilor attended the SIR and ASNR caucus meetings. There were no specific issues regarding spine imaging or intervention other than further discussion regarding the Deficit Reduction Act and its implications on imaging.
5. There was ample opportunity for the Councilors from the ASNR, SIR, ASITN and newest society represented, the ASSR to discuss relevant issues that may affect our members in the future and the ASSR was able to make a visible presence in representation of our membership during the meeting.

THE 2006 ASNR OUTSTANDING PRESENTATION AWARD IN SPINE RADIOLOGY PRESENTED TO DR. GEORGY

The 2006 ASNR Outstanding Presentation Award in Spine Radiology for the best paper/poster presentation at the ASNR 44th Annual Meeting in San Diego, California was given to Bassem A. Georgy, M.D. from Valley Radiology Consultants in Escondido, California.

Dr. Georgy's award-winning presentation (Paper #91) was entitled "Plasma-Mediated Radiofrequency-Based

Ablation in Conjunction with Percutaneous Cement Injection for Treating Painful Vertebral Compression Fractures Resulting from Metastasized Malignancy."

A subcommittee of ASSR members assisted the ASNR Education Committee in judging the presentations.

Congratulations to Dr. Georgy!

2007 ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM PREVIEW

Erin Simon Schwartz, M.D., President-Elect

Mark your calendar now for the *2007 Annual Symposium*, February 22-25 at the Marco Island Marriott Resort, Golf Club & Spa in Marco Island, Florida. It promises to be highly educational and entertaining!

Focus Sessions on Peripheral Nerves and the Post-Operative Spine will be followed by concurrent Diagnostic and Interventional programming. Planned Diagnostic sessions include: Cervical and Lumbar Pain, Spinal Trauma, -Opathies and -Idities, Advanced Imaging Techniques, and Pediatrics.

Planned Interventional sessions (with hands-on workshops available) include: What's New in Disc Therapy, Vertebral Augmentation, Spinal Injections, How I Do It, New Frontiers in Spine Intervention,

The Radiologist in the Exam Room – including why and how to get boarded in Pain, plus, updates from the NASS and ESNR, as well as at least 2 Self-Assessment Modules so you can easily and painlessly fulfill your annual requirement! Learn how to optimize 3T and new techniques for cervical nerve blocks, RF, and sacroplasty.

The leaders in the field of Spine Imaging and Intervention in the United States, including Drs. April, Bowen, Gilula, Houghton, Johnson, Law, Mathis, Ortiz, Wong, and Zoarski, will be complemented by renowned international faculty, including Drs. Bonaldi, Cianfoni, Muto, Parizel, Rossi, Tali, and Vanhoenacker.

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REIMBURSEMENT ISSUES

Your membership dues help to provide a voice at the ACR, ASNR, and AMA levels. We have now designated a dedicated ACR Councilor (Dr. Jeffrey Stone) and Alternate Councilor (Dr. Andrew Wagner) to represent our concerns. Please see Dr. Stone's report in this issue from the 2006 ACR meeting. The ASSR has a voice in coding issues related to imaging (such as functional MRI and MR spectroscopy) as well as in interventional procedures such as functional discography, IDET, and radiofrequency reimbursement. Dr. Stone also serves as our representative on the ACR Pay for Performance initiative. Other ASSR members such as Past President Dr. John Mathis have gone to Washington to speak at CMS meetings and I wish to thank him and the many others who have donated their time and efforts for the benefit of our membership.

MEMBERSHIP

One of our goals is to continue to increase and broaden our membership. We would particularly like to invite colleagues in musculoskeletal radiology, interventional radiol-

ogy, and other specialties to participate at our Annual Symposia and join the Society. Please share a brochure with a colleague or consider inviting a friend to join, submit a paper, or attend next year's meeting. Our dues and meeting registration fees are a bargain relative to other groups. If you have a friend that you would like to refer for membership, please send an email to Business Manager Ken Cammarata at kcammarata@asnr.org so we can send an application packet.

PAIN CERTIFICATION BOARDS

The ASSR has formed an ad hoc committee comprised of Dr. Wade Wong and Dr. John Fisk to research whether ASSR members can or should obtain board certification in pain management.

Suggestions

If you have ideas on how to improve the ASSR, please email me at awatanabe@pol.net. I look forward to hearing from you or seeing you at the *2007 Annual Symposium*.

2006 ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM AT THE VENETIAN RESORT HOTEL CASINO, LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Brian C. Bowen, Ph.D., M.D., FACR, First Past-President

The 2006 Annual Symposium was held at the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada, February 23–26. The Program Committee (consisting of Brian Bowen, Vic Haughton, Blake Johnson, Robert Quencer, Alyssa Watanabe, and Robert D. Zimmerman) organized an extensive program on spine imaging and intervention that involved 57 invited speakers and an audience of almost 300 participants. The program consisted of concurrent diagnostic and interventional sessions from 8:00am to 1:00pm on Thursday, February 23 and Friday, February 24, and concurrent joint sessions and interventional workshops on Saturday, February 25. The morning of Sunday, February 26 from 8:00am to 12:45pm was dedicated to scientific paper presentations and Excerpta Extraordinaire.

Both the diagnostic and interventional spine sessions received excellent reviews from the audience, although some participants suggested combining the two in a few focus sessions on specific pathological processes, such as degenerative disk disease or posttraumatic progressive myelopathy. The diagnostic sessions on Thursday and Friday followed a didactic format useful for reviewing for the Certificate of Added Qualification (CAQ) and the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) in Neuroradiology. The sessions reviewed Spine Development/ Degeneration (including Trauma and Spina Dysraphism), Spinal Cord Disease (Tumor, Inflammation, and Vascular Lesions), Vertebral and Extramedullary Disease (Tumor, Infection, and Spondyloarthropathies), and Imaging Techniques (MRA, CTA, 3T MRI, and weight-bearing MRI). On Saturday, participants in the joint sessions were introduced to the latest advances in MR imaging of the spinal cord – Diffusion Tensor Imaging (experimental and clinical), Perfusion Imaging, Functional MR, CSF Flow – as well as MR neurography of peripheral nerves.

Participants attending the interventional sessions also gave high marks to the coverage of both traditional and cutting-edge topics. These included Spine Interventions (for treatment of myofascial pain, facet synovitis, and various pain syndromes, as well as endoscopic navigation of the spine and CT fluoro in spine intervention), Disc Diagnosis and Therapy, and Vertebral Augmentation. A workshop on

Spinal Angiography and Embolization rounded out the Interventional portion of the program on Saturday. The wide range and depth of the didactic lectures were greatly appreciated by the audience, who responded with comments such as, “This is one of the best spine-oriented programs ...,” “Diversity of programming was great,” and “Well organized, well presented didactic lectures (with syllabus) were most effective. Terrific review/update of spine radiology. Top notch faculty.” A particularly well-received innovation in the program format was the scheduling of a keynote presentation to the entire audience at the beginning of each day, before splitting up into the concurrent sessions Thursday – Saturday. These keynote addresses were given by internationally recognized investigators — Frank Eismont MD (“Great Information from the Radiologist – What Does/Should the Surgeon Do With It?”), Orlando Ortiz MD, MBA (“Spine Injection Procedures: An Interventional Neuroradiologist’s Perspective on Value-Added Imaging Analysis”), and Graeme Bydder MB, ChB, FRCR (“The Use of Ultrashort TE [UTE] for the Study of the Spine”).

Participants were also given the opportunity to attend “Breakfast and Learn” and “Lunch and Learn” sessions presented by several experienced spine interventionalists and sponsored by many of the corporate supporters and exhibitors at the Symposium. Because of their unrestricted grant and other support, ASSR was able to make awards for best paper presentation and best scientific exhibit in both diagnostic and interventional spine categories, in addition to our annual Mentor Award for the best mentored research project. The final session of the Symposium was the Case-Based Review, which, as always, was a highlight of the meeting and enabled the participants to register their answers to questions posed by the panel of experts through the Audience Response System. The extra-curricular aspects of the Symposium were well attended with most participants staying well into the Las Vegas nights to share experiences and stories with old and new friends at the Opening Reception on Thursday and the Symposium Dinner Party (with mimes, magicians, strolling entertainers, and a band after dinner) on Saturday.

2006-2007 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TAKES OFFICE IN SAN DIEGO

The following members of the ASSR 2006-2007 Executive Committee assumed office immediately after the May 2, 2006 Annual Business Meeting. They will each serve in the positions listed below through the June 2007 Annual Business Meeting in Chicago, IL. A special thank you goes to A. Orlando Ortiz, M.D., M.B.A., who left the Executive Committee after the Annual Business Meeting. Doctor Ortiz served as society president in 2002-2003.

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ASSR TO COLLABORATE WITH NASS AND OTHERS

The North American Spine Society (NASS) has invited the ASSR to participate in a collaborative effort to develop evidence-based clinical guidelines and performance measures. This would be followed by the development of corresponding performance measures through the American Medical Association (AMA) Physician Consortium for Performance Improvement.

Along with the ASSR, the following societies have been invited to an initial planning meeting on October 13, 2006 in Chicago, Illinois: American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, American Academy of Family Physicians, International Spinal Injection Society and the American Academy of Pain Management.

Representing ASSR will be A. Orlando Ortiz, M.D., M.B.A., and Jeffrey A. Stone, M.D.



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ASSR 2006 ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM AWARD RECIPIENTS

The following were recipients of the ASSR 2006 Mentor, Best Paper, and Best Scientific Exhibit presentations at the ASSR 2006 Annual Symposium held February 23–26 at The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada:

Mentor Award Best Paper Presentation

Percutaneous Vertebroplasty: Evaluating The Short-and Long-Term Results For 1,000 Treated Fractures
Kenneth F. Layton, M.D., Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN
ASSR Member Mentor–Patrick H. Luetmer, M.D.

Best Paper Presentations

General Spine

L5 Nerve Sign: Applying The Lessons of Peripheral Neurorgraphy to the Conventional Lumbar MRI Scan
Phillip R. Chapman, M.D., Inland Imaging, Otis Orchards, WA

Interventional Spine

A Previously Unreported and Novel Approach to Sacroplasty
Douglas K. Smith, M.D., South Texas Radiology Group, San Antonio, TX

Best Scientific Exhibits

General Spine

Imaging of the Failed Back Syndrome
Phillip M. Young, M.D., Mayo Clinic Jacksonville, Jacksonville, FL

Interventional Spine

*Lower Cervical Nerve Root Block Using CT Fluoroscopy in Patient with Large Body Habitus:
Another Benefit of the Swimmer's Position*
Walter S. Bartynski, M.D., Presbyterian University Hospital, Pittsburgh, PA