Members Spoke; We Listened
2009 opens with two new ACFAS publications

Thirty-seven percent of members surveyed responded to a communications audit conducted last year. Over the past months staff has worked to translate the survey results into two new ACFAS member communications.

This Week @ ACFAS
Members asked for a broader look at news relevant to their practices...news about foot and ankle surgery, practice management, reimbursement, and technology. They wanted ACFAS to be a source of news they don’t receive from other podiatric publications and Internet sites.

Launched on January 21, This Week @ ACFAS is an e-newsletter offering just what the doctors ordered. Each issue, sent every Wednesday, is packed with the latest news gleaned from 15,000 articles appearing in newspapers, business publications, Web sites, national and international wire services and other publications. It’s tailored to the information needs of the practicing foot and ankle surgeon.

This Week will also be your up-to-date source of news from the College, including educational programs and e-learning opportunities, important deadlines and announcements, and new content and features on the College Web site.

If you haven’t yet started to receive This Week each Wednesday, you may need to set your email SPAM filter to accept email from ACFAS@infoinc.com. You’ll also want to make sure ACFAS has your current email address. You can update your membership profile information on the MyACFAS section of acfas.org.

An Update for Update
This issue of the ACFAS Update newsletter has a new format and focus, reflecting members’ responses to last year’s communications audit survey:
• More frequent. You’ll be receiving the newsletter eight times per year...about every six weeks, to assure content that continued on page 4

There’s still time to join ACFAS in Washington
A familiar face you see on television will join ACFAS in March. Newsweek magazine’s senior Washington correspondent and columnist, Howard Fineman, will be keynote speaker for the Opening General Session on March 5, announced Sean T. Grambart, DPM, Annual Scientific Conference chairman.

In his role as NBC political analyst, Washington insider Fineman is a frequent contributor to Hardball with Chris Matthews and Countdown with Keith Olbermann. With humor and insight, he’ll lead our audience through a discussion of the most pressing issues affecting our nation and the new administration.

The Opening Session will wrap up with a bang with The Capitol Steps, Congressional staffers-turned-comedians who will attack current headlines with political humor and song. The troupe, which puts the “mock” into democracy, is sure to put a smile on your face as you embark on the multi-faceted learning, compelling experiences, and powerful resources that comprise “One Step Ahead”...the 2009 ACFAS Annual Scientific Conference.

It’s not too late to register to attend the March 4-8 Conference in Washington, D.C. On-site registration will be available on Wednesday, March 4 from 1:00 – 5:00 pm and on Thursday, March 5 starting at 6:30 am at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center.

When planning your schedule for the conference, don’t forget to include the Saturday night event at the International Spy Museum and D.C.’s Gordon Biersch brewery-restaurant. Tickets, which cover both the museum and dinner, are available at the ACFAS Registration Desk at the Gaylord National.

Board Election Results
The polls have closed and the ballots have been counted. ACFAS members have elected three new members to the Board of Directors. Read the full story on page 7.
On March 6, I will turn over the President’s gavel to Dr. Mary Crawford. While 2009 may be remembered for the controversy over mandatory vs. voluntary professional membership in APMA, the year also held many positive and significant accomplishments for ACFAS and its members.

The year began with the revelation and publication of the AMA module on podiatric medicine and surgery, which unfairly characterized the education and training of podiatric physicians and surgeons. While it was, and remains, unclear how widely this document had been circulated before AMA “withdrew” the document for revisions, the College’s Professional Relations Committee joined forces with all other podiatric organizations to provide factual information in a formal response to the AMA.

The AMA module was an early indicator of the challenges ahead for the College and podiatric physicians nationally, the most notable of which occurred in Florida, Utah and Texas.

In Florida, the orthopedic challenge to the podiatric scope of practice fell short in the legislature. For now, it appears that the scope of practice for podiatric foot and ankle surgeons in Florida is safe, but no one believes that the battle is over.

In Texas, the state Supreme Court will soon decide whether to hear TPMA’s appeal of the case that the state podiatry board correctly interpreted the scope of practice to allow rearfoot surgery. TPMA won at the trial level but lost a 2-1 vote at the appellate level. Should the Court choose to hear the case, ACFAS has agreed to a TPMA request to assist in the appeal process.

Unfortunately we did not fare as well in Utah where our colleagues lost their academic positions at the University of Utah and have been prevented from practicing in that setting. While we continue to monitor that situation, we have not seen willingness on the part of the University to reverse its position.

These challenges prompted the College to complete and publish its background paper on the Education, Training and Certification of ACFAS Podiatric Foot and Ankle Surgeons. The document, completed in September, provides up-to-date and factual information on the education and training podiatric physicians currently receive. It also contrasts this training to the foot and ankle surgery-specific training of orthopedic foot and ankle surgeons. The background paper is available at acfas.org/education-training as a resource and benefit to all members.

Also in the past year, the Fellowship Task Force was elevated to a standing committee. With this action, the College demonstrates a commitment to fellowships as a valuable resource in advanced surgical training. Several surgical fellowships exist throughout the country and are affiliated with many training programs. However, there is no coordinated and official accounting of these fellowships. Over the next year you will hear more about surgical fellowships. The College expects to serve as a resource for any member desiring information on surgical fellowships, with a listing of all current surgical fellowships, including type of fellowship, program requirements and contact information.

ACFAS also took steps toward expanding the research role of the College with recruitment of sites for an ACFAS-sponsored research protocol, a trend the College hopes to continue for years to come. This research, Multi-Center Retrospective Review of Resectional Arthroplasty, Arthrodesis and Hemi-Metallic Joint Implants in the Surgical Treatment of End Stage Hallux Rigidus, was designed by the ACFAS Research Committee. It is our expectation that more opportunities of this type will present themselves in the future.

When I became ACFAS President last February, a past president gave me this advice on dealing with difficult decisions: “Go with your gut.” That is what I have tried to do. By following my gut, at the end of the day I was able to say that I tried my best to do the right thing, regardless of how things worked out. To Mary Crawford I offer the same advice and a reminder that you are the President for all 6,000 ACFAS members. Solicit and listen to their current needs and visions for the future, then build consensus for sound policy and programs in their best interests. With a superb Board of Directors behind you, I know you will succeed.

As I look back on the accomplishments of this year, a series of thanks are in order. I wish to thank my fellow Board members for their diligent work on behalf of the College. I also thank the many volunteers who have made ACFAS what it is today. And I thank the members of the ACFAS staff who run the day to day operations of the College. Without all of them, an already difficult job would have been truly impossible.

Finally, I thank all of the members. I have heard from many of you this past year, some positive, some negative. While some expressed concern and disappointment, others offered encouragement and support. Your comments were always professional, and regardless of your opinions, no one can question your passion and commitment to the College.
New CME Courses Debut in 2009

Foot and ankle surgeons will stay ahead of the curve when they take advantage of the mix of proven favorites and new opportunities comprising the 2009 ACFAS education calendar.

“The new Complex Reconstruction Surgical Skills Course, to be held in Las Vegas, will be a unique weekend in terms of location and an interesting layout of procedural skills,” says Christopher Lamy, DPM, chair of the Surgical Skills Committee. “It will be a mixture of procedures from routine problems to some complex procedures as well.”

If you’re looking to be pushed out of your comfort zone, this course is for you! Surgeons seeking an advanced program will have the opportunity to rotate through three focused tracks:
• First Ray Surgeries: implant arthroplasty reconstruction, bone block distraction and fusion.
• Rearfoot Surgeries: sub talar, talar navicular, navicular cuneiform osteotomy.

Instructors will guide you through an intensive learning experience using the most up-to-date techniques and technology. Experienced faculty members with extensive resumes will expose attendees to many levels of knowledge.

“Our arthroscopy course is always a big hit for people who either want to build skills or have a refresher to increase that group of procedures or techniques in their practice,” Lamy continues. The Foot and Ankle Arthroscopy Surgical Skills Course fills up well in advance each time it’s offered. Early sign-up for these sessions is advised.

The treatment of the diabetic patient has changed at the speed of light. Tools, evaluation sources, and evidence have made great strides, yet so many surgeons are still using yesterday’s blueprint for treatment. The Diabetic Foot and Ankle Surgery Summer Summit will shift your focus with the thought-provoking information on topics such as Surgical Principles, Flap Surgery, Ulceration, Equinus, Charcot, Osteomyelitis and Amputation. The didactic offerings of the first three days of the program will be topped off with an optional Sunday morning skills lab. You’ll charge your batteries with a flood of new ideas at the Friday night ‘Wine & Wisdom’ gathering, where controversy and challenging cases will be debated.

The knowledge base of practice management and coding is changing fast. Keep up with the latest at one of the two Practice Management and Coding Seminars. Physicians, practice managers and billing staff will learn the latest techniques for enhancing the practice’s profitability.

Current advances in treatment and technology, including a look at how aging affects flatfoot, will be addressed in the Flatfoot Surgical Skills Course. Participants will reconstruct a flatfoot in a stepwise fashion over the length of the course.

Dates and locations for these courses can be found in the Education Calendar, below. Watch your mailbox and acfas.org for full details and registration information.

What’s New @ ACFAS e-Learning
The ever-expanding collection of online education opportunities at acfas.org/elearning is available to members, residents and students 24/7. New CME and review activities provide tools to refresh your knowledge and resolve your clinical challenges.

Check out the latest podcasts, scientific
continued on page 4

2009 Education Programs Calendar

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continued on page 4

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May 15-16, 2009
(Friday-Saturday)
Practice Management and Coding Seminar
Charleston Marriott
Charleston, SC

June 19-20, 2009
(Friday-Saturday)
Foot and Ankle Arthroscopy Surgical Skills Course
Orthopaedic Learning Center
Rosemont, IL

July or August (Dates TBD)
Diabetic Foot and Ankle Summer Summit
Sonoma, CA

September 25-26, 2009
(Friday-Saturday)
Practice Management and Coding Seminar
Allerton Hotel
Chicago, IL

October 10-11, 2009
Flatfoot Surgical Skills Course
Scientific Education and Research Institute (SERI)
Thornton, CO

November 14 OR 15, 2009
Complex Reconstruction Surgical Skills Course
Red Rock Casino/Wright Medical Mobile Lab
Las Vegas, NV

December 12-13, 2009
Foot and Ankle Arthroscopy Surgical Skills Course
Orthopaedic Learning Center
Rosemont, IL
sessions, practice management presentations, and surgical technique series wherever and whenever you wish.

**Podcasts:** Recent additions to the popular podcast series are “Coding,” moderated by practice management expert Christine Weikert, DPM, and “Dialogue with Lowell S. Weil, Sr.,” moderated by Barry Rosenblum, DPM and James Thomas, DPM. Coming up: the March podcast, “Fixation Debate,” moderated by Donald E. Buddecke, Jr., DPM, and April’s “Osteobiologics,” moderated by Jarrett D. Cain, DPM and Michael McGlamery, DPM.

**Practice Management Sessions:** Douglas G. Stoker, DPM and a panel of experts guide you through “Roadblocks to Your Practice,” in the newest addition to this area.

**Clinical Sessions:** The latest additions to this e-learning section are “What’s Up, Doc?,” a practical approach to using evidence-based medicine in your practice moderated by Christopher J. Lamy, DPM, and “Bunion Complications,” moderated by Allen M. Jacobs, DPM.

is fresh and relevant.

- **Better organized.** You won’t have to hunt for the news that’s most important to you…*Update* will be organized into departments so you can easily locate just what you’re looking for.
- **More focused.** Articles will be shorter, more to the point, and will offer links to in-depth online information when available.
- **Easier to handle.** Members asked for a manageable size that is easy to read whenever a few minutes become available…on a plane, just before a meeting, or at home.
- **Easier on the eyes and the environment.** From the finish on the eco-friendly paper to the strong colors in the vegetable-based inks, *Update* will be a pleasure to read while protecting our natural resources.

**Drop Us a Line**

*This Week* and *Update* will be “works in progress,” and members are an important part of the process. Your ideas, preferences, and comments will help these new publications meet the needs of all ACFAS members. Contact us at communications@acfas.org. We’re waiting to hear from you!

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Patients hear ACFAS 680 million times in 2008

Through its media interviews, news releases, story placements in print, broadcast and online, ACFAS’ message reached the public 680 million times last year. And, more than 2.3 million people visited FootPhysicians.com in 2008, a 65 percent increase over 2007.

FootPhysicians.com is the ACFAS Web site for patients and the public. It provides them with trustworthy medical information on dozens of foot and ankle conditions. FootPhysicians.com consistently ranks among the top pages on Google for keywords ranging from ankle sprain and bunions to crutches and broken toe.

Visitors to the site downloaded our podcasts more than 29,000 times in 2008. The ACFAS YouTube video on bunion myths generated more than 28,000 views.

2008 was a banner year for ACFAS’ public relations program, and we’ll continue similar efforts to get the message out in 2009.

Latest Stories Make For a Happy New Year

A lot of Americans make New Year’s resolutions to exercise and lose weight. You may even be one of them. But wearing the wrong shoes or plunging into a new activity can lead to painful foot conditions including plantar fasciitis, neuromas and Achilles tendon problems. ACFAS addressed this annual trend in a New Year’s news release.

The story is all over the Internet, appearing on the Web sites of Target, Kroger, USA Today, the Washington Post, more than 100 television stations and many hospital and health system Web sites. Even news outlets in South Korea, Canada, Mexico and Guatemala covered this ACFAS story.

Decatur, Ill.’s Herald & Review quoted foot and ankle surgeon Kimberly Eickmeier, DPM, in a story about the ACFAS news release. Tampa’s WTVT-TV broadcast an interview with foot and ankle surgeon Juan Rivera, DPM.

The story was syndicated by HealthDay and United Press International, and generated coverage on AOL’s That’s Fit blog as well as Muscle Mag Fitness.

ACFAS has gotten PR on other winter topics as well. The November/December issue of My Family Doctor magazine quoted ACFAS President John Giurini, DPM, on winter ankle injury care.

The New Journal in suburban Philadelphia quoted local foot and ankle surgeon David Erfle, DPM, in a December story that shared ACFAS tips on treating ankle sprains and other injuries caused by winter snow and ice.

On the topic of diabetes, ACFAS’ November campaign to spotlight diabetes and burning and tingling feet raked in additional publicity since reported in the last issue of this newsletter. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch talked about us on their health blog, Houston’s La Informacion alerted Spanish-speaking readers, and foot and ankle surgeon Christopher Hendrix, DPM, appeared in live interviews on both WPTY-TV and WHBQ-TV in Memphis.

Finally, The MomTini Lounge, a blog for moms, shared five ACFAS tips designed to help parents protect their children from school sports injuries.

Watch for Publicity at Conference Time

Keep an eye out for media coverage of ACFAS’ 67th Annual Scientific Conference in March. We plan to issue several news releases highlighting trends and developments in the profession. The Washington, D.C. conference also marks ACFAS’ first sock donation drive, sponsored by Dox Podiatry. If you’re attending the conference, we’re asking you to contribute new socks that ACFAS will donate to the National Coalition for the Homeless. ACFAS and the Coalition will promote this campaign to the D.C. media.

Attract patients with FOOTNOTES

A patient may come in to see you for bunions, and not give much thought to the fact you could help her diabetic mother or her child with heel pain. Educate patients on all the things you can do to keep them, and their families, healthy.

Print out the FOOTNOTES patient newsletter, add your practice’s contact information, and distribute it in your waiting room or at community health events. FOOTNOTES, an ACFAS members-only benefit, is available in English and Spanish at acfas.org/marketing/footnotes.
Find a Wealth of Journal Research in Scientific Literature Reviews

Every month, many medical journals publish research that can benefit foot and ankle surgeons. The *Journal of Foot & Ankle Surgery* remains the must-read, but other, non-podiatric journals shed light on research that ACFAS members may find useful.

There’s a quick and easy way to find these articles. Every month, John S. Steinberg, DPM, directs residents at podiatric residencies across the nation to read and summarize research from non-podiatric journals such as the *Journal of Vascular Surgery*, *The American Journal of Sports Medicine*, and *Diabetes Care*. The summaries are compiled into the Scientific Literature Reviews feature on acfas.org/pubresearch/slr.

Thank you to all the residency programs which contributed to Scientific Literature Reviews in 2008:
- Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston, Mass.
- University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, South Side Hospital, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- Norton Audubon Hospital, Louisville, Ky.
- Augustana VA Medical Center, Augustana, Ga.
- Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Mass.
- Botsford General Hospital, Warren, Mich.
- Olive View-UCLA Medical Center, Los Angeles, Calif.
- St. John North Shores Hospital, Harrison Township, Mich.
- Kentucky Podiatric Norton Program, Louisville, Ky.
- Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine and UHHS Richmond Heights Medical, Independence, Ohio.
- St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, South Bend, Ind.
- North Colorado Medical Center, Greeley, Colo.
- Detroit Medical Center, Warren, Mich.
- Kennedy Memorial Hospital, Turnersville, N.J.
- Cambridge Health Alliance, Cambridge, Mass.
- Hoboken University Medical Center, Hoboken, N.J.
- Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Beverly Hills, Calif.
- Roxborough Memorial Hospital, Philadelphia, Pa.
- Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System, Montgomery, Ala.

Thank you to the JFAS peer reviewers

Within the scientific publishing field, the process of peer review is both time-honored and effective. Peer reviewers serve as the voice of a journal’s readership, providing constructive criticism related to the scientific merit and overall interest a manuscript conveys.

Without the efforts of volunteer reviewers, we would not be able to assure the high standards of the content published in the *Journal of Foot & Ankle Surgery*. Over 200 reviewers participated in evaluation of manuscripts in 2008; a list of their names may be viewed at acfas.org/pubresearch/jfas.

If you have an interest in contributing to the podiatric literature by serving as a peer reviewer, please contact Editor Scot Malay, DPM, editorjfas@gmail.com.

2008 ACFAS Clinical and Scientific Research Grant Winner

The ACFAS Research Committee has selected the Clinical and Scientific Research Grant recipient for 2008: Paul J. Kim, DPM, of Midwestern University. Dr. Kim received $19,400 for his study: *Physiological Response to Surgical Microdebridement in Patients with Achilles Tendinopathy*.

The Clinical and Scientific Research Grant provides financial assistance, through the generous support of the Divisions, for research within the podiatric surgical arena that could otherwise not be funded. The purpose of this grant is to fund research with either direct or indirect impact on issues of interest to members of ACFAS and to educate members in the implementation of EBM for the advancement of their clinical practice and patient needs. This research may be clinical or laboratory-based, with clearly defined research goals meeting all the criteria for grant submission.

Announcing Forefoot CPG

After two years in the making, the Forefoot Disorders Clinical Practice Guideline will appear in the March/April issue of the *Journal of Foot & Ankle Surgery*.

Leading experts in the field of foot and ankle surgery served on the panel that continued on page 7
At the start of a new year, patients must meet new deductibles. Others may have new policies with new rules. With this in mind, staff must be charged with updating patient information on a regular basis. They may say “we are already doing that.” But all too often this is not the case, producing a negative effect on your bottom line and cash flow.

With today’s Medicare HMOs and other new healthcare options, patients have been changing insurance plans more often than in years past. When a patient contacts the office to schedule an appointment, staff should check for any changes in insurance information, address or telephone numbers. If the patient states there are no changes, this should be documented in a note section. Staff should check the current insurance card at each visit. If there has been a change, the new card should be scanned or copied, the entry of the change dated, and all necessary changes made to ensure the claim will process correctly. If there have been no changes, document this.

By documenting the patient’s response, the office has a starting point when a claim is denied because it was submitted to the wrong insurance company. Such errors can be caught quickly during prompt AR follow up, but why depend on follow up? The goal is to get it right the first time. Providers, office managers and key personnel need to educate, instruct and require that this happen.

CPT Changes and Documentation
CPT procedure codes have been changed for 2009. Information on changes affecting foot and ankle surgical practices is available at acfas.org/2009cpt.

Documentation is key. For a thorough medical record, it is extremely important to document all aspects of services provided. In situations such as the treatment of ulcers, thorough documentation can be the answer to billing clarification. The insurance company may request the medical record to finalize a decision on a pending claim. A well documented record provides sufficient verification of services rendered and diagnoses.

Patient Deductibles and Out-of-Pocket Costs
Staff should pay attention to insurance plan annual deductibles during the first quarter of the year. In addition, patient eligibility and benefits should be checked so the office knows the patient’s out-of-pocket responsibility.

Physician offices find themselves educating patients on their insurance plans. It is beneficial to both the patient and the practice when the staff knows the patient’s benefits for recommended services. The patient must be made aware if a deductible applies to a service, if the plan pays only a portion of the fee, or if the procedure is a non-covered service. If an ABN needs to be signed, review the options with the patient and verify they understand and have no questions. Obtain the required signature and document this in the file.

Most Medicare and other major insurance Web sites offer FAQ (frequently asked questions) sections, fee schedules and updates to code changes. We recommend your office visit these sites to compare your current information with the 2009 updates. There undoubtedly are program and customized form changes. The sooner they do this at the beginning of the year, the better your practice’s bottom line will be.

Christine E. Weikert, DPM, FACFAS, is a practicing podiatrist and President & CEO of The Podiatric Billing Specialists, LLC.

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**RESEARCH** continued from page 6
reviewed hundreds of medical studies to develop the CPG.

“It’s challenging for physicians to keep up with the high volume of medical literature that is published,” says James Thomas, DPM, co-author of the guidelines. “The Forefoot Clinical Practice Guideline distills that literature for them and simplifies patient treatment.”

The guidelines cover digital deformities, central metatarsalgia, Morton’s neuroma, tailor’s bunion and trauma.

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Board of Directors Election Results
In balloting that concluded on January 22, ACFAS members elected two new members to the Board of Directors and re-elected one incumbent:

- Thomas S. Roukis, DPM of Tacoma, Wash. for a three-year term
- Jerome K. Steck, DPM of Tucson, Ariz. for a three-year term
- Douglas G. Stoker, DPM of Salt Lake City, Utah, re-elected for a two-year term.

At the March 6 Honors and Awards Ceremony during the Annual Scientific Conference, these new directors will join the continuing members of the 2009-10 Board of Directors:

- President Mary E. Crawford, DPM of Everett, Wash.
- President-Elect Michael S. Lee, DPM of Des Moines, Iowa
- Secretary-Treasurer Glenn M. Weinraub, DPM of Danville, Calif.
- Immediate Past-President John M. Giurini, DPM of Boston, Mass.
- Director Michelle L. Butterworth, DPM of Kingstree, S.C.
- Director Jordan P. Grossman, DPM of Akron, Ohio
- Director Jerome S. Noll, DPM of Naples, Fla.
- Chairman, Division Presidents Council Marc A. Kravette, DPM of Seattle, Wash.

Strategic Compass Revision and Member Surveys on March Board Agenda
Completing work started at its November meeting, the ACFAS Board of Directors will finalize changes to the College’s Strategic Compass at its March 4 meeting in Washington, D.C.

“An organization’s strategic plan must be a living document, evolving with changes to the environment in which its members practice,” said President-Elect Mary E. Crawford, DPM. “The economy, the regulatory environment, reimbursement trends and technology are among just a few of the factors we’ve taken into account in fine tuning this important ACFAS plan.”

Further research into the needs of ACFAS members and the issues they face will take place this spring. Two surveys will be conducted. A practice survey will provide information regarding individual members’ practice setting, hospital affiliations, insurance plans and patient demographics. A second survey will produce an environmental scan of factors that will shape the future of the profession. A random sample of members will be surveyed.

“The results of this research will directly affect the Board’s decisions regarding the future of the College and how it can best serve its members,” stated Crawford. “I ask that members take the time to complete the survey if asked. It’s a way to contribute to the future of the profession just by answering a series of questions!”

In Memoriam
The College has recently received word of the passing of the following Fellows:

- Ronald G. Elkouri, DPM, Wichita, Ks.
- Harold Sarles, DPM, Marietta, Ga.
- Stuart M. Sharon, DPM, Scottsdale, Ariz.
- Jeffrey S. Siegel, DPM, Long Beach, Calif.