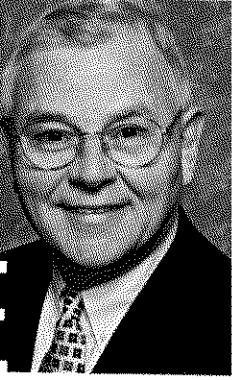


PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



Where Do We Go From Here?

By Gary P. Jolly, DPM, FACFAS,
2004-2005 President

The American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons faces critical issues which are the direct result of pressures from national and local health care systems. The College's response to those pressures will define to the world what the College is and what it will become. To understand the changes which must carry our College into the future, it is essential to have some understanding of our history.

ACFAS was founded in 1947 by a group of podiatrists with an interest in foot surgery, which they saw as an emerging science. The organization provided a forum to discuss common interests and a vehicle for developing friendships among kindred spirits. The College grew as more podiatrists began to practice foot and ankle surgery.

Until the mid 1970s the College served as a credentialing organization to attest to the competence of its fellows. With the creation of the American Board of Podiatric Surgery, the role of the College changed to that of providing education and support to its member surgeons.

Since then a great many changes have occurred within our College of almost 6,000 foot and ankle surgeons... and please note I use the term 'foot and ankle surgeon,' rather than podiatrist. Although we are all podiatrists by virtue of our degree, we are foot and ankle surgeons by virtue of our training and experience. The time has come for all of us to acknowledge that fact, and it is as foot and ankle surgeons that we should be known to others. *Our* training, which has grown both in length and intensity, reflects this fact vividly. *Our* journal—*The Journal of Foot & Ankle Surgery*, proclaims this fact as it is read around the world. *Our* qualification and certification from the American Board of Podiatric Surgery validates and testifies to the fact. We practice our specialty in a "market place" and in order to distinguish ourselves from other foot care providers, it is imperative that we develop our own brand identity, which can be easily recognized by consumers, other physicians and the insurance industry.

A Look Ahead

As we look to the future we may be asking ourselves "where will the College take us next?" However, what we should be asking is "where will we take our College?"

Our annual meeting is extraordinary, and we will make each succeeding meeting even better. It is unfortunate that more members don't attend this meeting, as they are missing the opportunity to enhance their knowledge base and the enjoyment of reunions and the *gemutlichkeit* that is experienced at such events. I challenge each of you to convince your colleagues who haven't attended our annual meeting to make the trip to New Orleans next March.

Our journal has served as an icon for our organization and has emerged as a strong and well respected publication. Its status has been strengthened through the efforts of its editor and the Journal Managerial Committee, and during the coming year it will be further enhanced as greater numbers of authors, both those in the United States and abroad, contribute the fruits of their scientific labors to our Journal for publication.

As we move forward into the twenty-first century, the way in which we practice our specialty is going to be affected by scientific literature to an even greater extent than before. There is a growing trend toward what has come to be called *evidence based medicine*, which will require a much more critical eye in the appreciation of scientific literature and a measured application of that information into clinical decision making. Evidence based medicine is currently being taught in medical schools and in post doctoral training programs, and we as individuals and as a specialty College, will need to embrace this as well. President-elect John Stienstra and a newly appointed task force will be working to introduce evidence based medicine into the foot and ankle surgical community and to integrate it into our culture.

Where else should the College expend its resources, as we look towards the future? I believe the answer is clear: because the mission of the College is education, it is only right that ACFAS become an active player in the decision making process of **surgical education** at all levels. Our future is ultimately dependant on our ability to produce well trained, competent foot and ankle surgeons, and the current formula for postgraduate education must be enhanced.

To effectively train a foot and ankle surgeon in all aspects of our specialty, including trauma and soft tissue reconstruction, requires more time and resources than we currently allow.

Fellowships must be developed to provide additional training in these and other areas. Toward that end, I have appointed a task force to develop guidelines, criteria and requirements for accreditation of fellowships in foot and ankle surgery. It is important that the work of this task force not take place in a vacuum, and so it is my intention to work with the Council on Podiatric Medical Education on this matter.

The College currently has a very limited voice in the decision making processes of the CPME. Historically, it has been the APMA which drove the educational development of our profession. With the emergence of the College and its clearly defined mission, the time has come for ACFAS to assist the Council, not just on the issue of fellowships, but with all aspects of education of foot and ankle surgeons. This responsibility is ours and ours alone, and we must be prepared to roll up our sleeves and work with the CPME to develop and enhance surgical education at all levels.

A special note to students, residents and newly-practicing surgeons: You are our future. You have been granted a wonderful opportunity through your training and have a much clearer view of how to practice in the twenty-first century. It is you who have the most to gain, but also you who have the most to lose. I urge each of you to play an active role in the College throughout your careers, and to prepare yourselves for leadership positions in this organization.

In order for the College to flourish and to continue to provide us with the services it does, it is going to take a greater commitment from each of us, not only by volunteering for committees, but by taking advantage of all the continuing education opportunities that the College provides, by reading and critiquing the papers in our journal, by reading *Update* to stay abreast of issues which are of political and economic importance to all of us, and most importantly by identifying with the College as members of a unique group.

As we begin a new year of governance I promise to do my best to advance the College in its mission, and to help garner recognition for both the College and its members. I look forward to serving you, my surgical colleagues, as the 53rd president of the American College of **Foot and Ankle Surgeons**.

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ACFAS is dedicated to promoting the art and science of foot and ankle surgery for the public welfare, the continued improvement of standards of education, and the practice of foot and ankle surgery.