

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



Vox Populare

By Gary P. Jolly, DPM, FACFAS
President

It's not easy to become a Fellow of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons. Each Fellow must successfully complete an arduous process of education, training and Board certification before being granted that status. But that is only the beginning. Once they achieve Fellow status, they must maintain membership in the APMA and their state and local societies, and they must remain Diplomats in good standing with the American Board of Podiatric Surgery. Those are a lot of organizations and those are a lot of dues, which must first be paid, before our members can even pay their dues to the College.

I wasn't born rich, and so I appreciate the value of a dollar and the efforts that each of us must make in clinical practice to earn that dollar. Paying dues to organizations is a cost of being a specialist. We must do this in order to support those organizations, which exist to provide services and support for each of us. However, as dues paying members of all of these organizations, how often do we critically look at what these organizations are doing with our dues dollars, what services they are providing, and how these services actually benefit us? In other words, how much bang are we getting for our buck?

Diplomat of the American Board of Podiatric Surgery in 1979 and a Fellow of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons in 1982. I grumble a lot when I have to cough up my dues to all but one of these organizations. The one payment that I do feel good about making is the one to ACFAS. I can clearly see the results of my dues in the four strategic initiatives of the College: advanced education and training, promoting the profession to consumers and allopathic medicine, scientific publications and research, and practice management and advocacy. I also see the effect that having those six letters after my degree has on my professional colleagues, and I am very proud of it.

I have been fortunate in that I have had the privilege of serving on the ACFAS Board of Directors since 1999. One of the first realizations that I experienced was that the governance of this organization was based on the needs of its members. All of the decisions which were made by the College's Board of Directors were in response to our members' needs and wishes.

How did we come to know what our members actually wanted? We asked them! In 2002 the

often, boards operate within a vacuum, neither seeking the opinions of those they serve, nor offering to those whose dues they collect an opportunity to express those concerns.

When an individual pays membership dues to an organization, that individual should have an opportunity to have an impact on that organization if he or she chooses to do so. How many podiatric organizations actually permit that, let alone encourage it? When was the last time any other organization actively sought your opinion in order to chart its course? When was the last time you actively sought to influence any organization, and were able to do so successfully?

It seems to me that two problems coexist within our profession. One is the lack of understanding of the needs of the members of our professional organizations and the other is the disinterest of the individual members of our profession. We should become more critical of what our professional organizations provide each of us, and we shouldn't be shy about sharing those criticisms with the leadership of any organization which fails to meet our expectations. It should also be incumbent upon the organizational leaders to make a genuine effort to understand what is actually being expected of them by the members who pay dues to support their governance.

I truly believe that the ACFAS leadership goes the extra mile to understand its members' needs and tailors its strategic plan to meet them. I am extremely proud of that, and it is why I feel that the other podiatric organizations should do the same.

"How did we come to know what our members actually wanted? We asked them!"

Just as the local, state and federal governments to which we pay taxes are accountable to us as tax payers, the professional associations, societies and specialty colleges to which we pay dues are accountable to us as dues paying members. All too often, as the various dues invoices arrive through the mail in seemingly endless waves, we grumble to ourselves about having to pay. Yet, more often than not, we pay, while vowing that this year we are going to "say something to somebody." But we rarely do.

Professional organizations exist to serve us. I know, because I have been a member of the APMA since 1975 and a member of my county and state societies since 1979. I became a

College surveyed its members, inquiring how the College could best serve them. During that same year the College held numerous focus groups to better understand exactly what our members expected of us.

As a result of these surveys, the Board created a strategic plan to meet your needs. And now, this winter, the College will be conducting yet another round of surveys in order to improve its service to you.

I am extremely proud that ACFAS members actually drive the activities of the College. Unfortunately, not all of the organizations to which I pay dues feel the same way about addressing my needs and concerns. All too

Get Involved!

Volunteer to serve on an ACFAS committee!

See the 2005 Call for Committee Volunteers enclosed with this issue, or go to:

www.acfas.org/2005committee.call.html

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