

# From my perspective

In the coming years, surgeons are going to be expected to produce evidence of their ability to provide safe, effective, quality care. They will also have to maintain clear records of their participation in lifelong learning experiences. To help surgeons maintain their credentials and competitive edge in the continuously changing health care environment, the College has been launching a number of initiatives, many of which have been described previously in this column. Examples include *e-FACS.org*, the College's Web portal, and our new case log system. They all are intended to facilitate surgeons' efforts to provide information to the surgical boards, licensing bodies, and hospitals.

Most recently, the Division of Education has sought to expand the College's accreditation activities. This latest effort was the focus of an article in the March issue of the *Bulletin* and is the primary focus of this column.

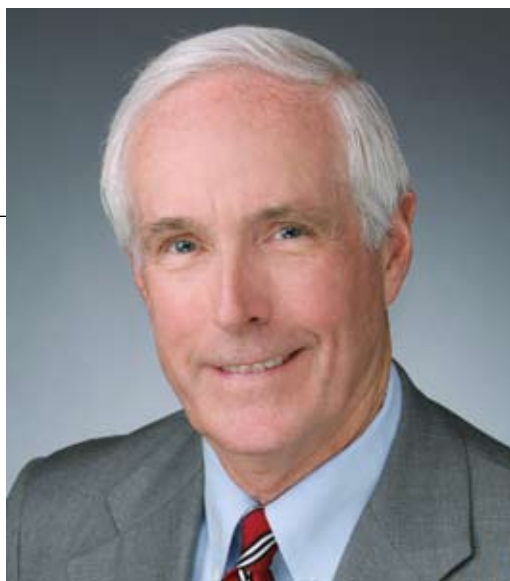
## *Changing expectations*

We all are becoming familiar with the surgical boards' evolving requirements for maintenance of certification. As an educational and professional association committed to helping surgeons to provide quality surgical care, the American College of Surgeons has developed a number of programs to assist surgeons in their efforts to comply with the boards' expectations.

It is important to note that the boards aren't the only entities establishing stricter criteria for accepting surgeons into their ranks. Hospitals are facing new demands to prove that they offer quality care for a competitive price. They are taking various steps to prove to payors and consumers why they should be the medical centers that provide patients with care.

Moreover, many health care facilities are coming to the realization that it is beyond their capability to excel in all forms of medical and specialty care. Instead, they are striving to develop teams of health care professionals who can treat certain conditions exceptionally well and achieve the best possible outcomes.

As hospitals seek to advance their reputations, they will undoubtedly become more selective in granting privileges. They will be looking to recruit surgeons who have attained knowledge about and advanced skills in performing certain



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types of procedures. Surgeons who can offer evidence that they have done a number of such operations and experienced successful outcomes are the individuals most likely to find work and to handle the most complex and interesting cases.

Hospitals, medical boards, specialty societies, payors, and others have in many ways created a novel enterprise—one that revolves around improving the quality of patient care. To play an active role in this venture, surgeons and the organizations that represent them need to produce relevant information, standards, and programs.

## *ACS expands accreditation activities*

As one means to this end, the American College of Surgeons is expanding its accreditation activities to include educational institutes. We believe it is important for the College to engage in the accreditation of educational institutes at this time in order to ensure that surgeons remain

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competitive and competent in the use of advanced technology, can account for their outcomes, and are able meet new continuing medical education requirements.

Many of you probably read with interest the article on page 8 of last month's issue of the *Bulletin*, entitled "Accreditation of education institutes by the American College of Surgeons: A new program following an old tradition." This article provided details about the College's decision to enter into this new endeavor.

As the authors of the article explained, the College launched the Program for the Accreditation of Education Institutes during the 2005 Clinical Congress in San Francisco, CA. The College-accredited institutes will serve as regional sites where surgeons may learn about and expand their capabilities in new procedures, emerging technologies, and rarely performed procedures. These facilities also will verify that surgeons have obtained knowledge and skills that conform to predetermined standards as set forth by this organization.

Our present goal is to establish a network of regional institutes that provide educational opportunities to practicing surgeons, surgical residents, medical students, and other members of the surgical team to address the spectrum of surgical skills and competencies. We anticipate that surgeons will be able to obtain several levels of education at these institutes. The most basic level of training would involve attending lectures, while more advanced levels would incorporate the various types of high-tech, hands-on experience we can now provide.

The institutes will incorporate state-of-the-art educational methods and technology, including opportunities to learn through the use of simulators and virtual reality. In addition, the institutes ultimately may be involved in collaborative educational research and development conducted under the aegis of the College and may serve as demonstration sites for certain new educational technologies.

### *Applying for accreditation*

We have established two review committees that will be responsible for making accreditation decisions. These committees will apply specific criteria to selecting institutes accredited at two

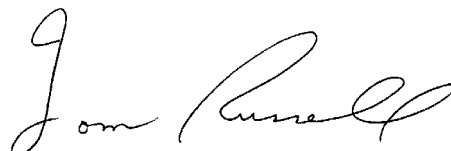
levels—comprehensive and basic. Institutes may apply for either level of accreditation.

Applications for accreditation and information have been mailed to surgical education institutes and are available through the Division of Education page on the College's Web portal (*e-FACS.org*) and on its Web site (*www.facs.org*). We are in the process of developing an interactive Web page to facilitate dissemination and collection of accreditation materials and information on the ACS-accredited institutes' activities.

### *On an important path*

I want to point out that this project is the result of the dedicated efforts of 18 ad hoc committee members, and I would like to thank them and their Chair, Carlos A. Pellegrini, MD, FACS, for developing this wonderful program.

The ACS Board of Regents and other College leaders believe that these institutes will enable surgeons to participate in the educational experiences they need to maintain certification, to obtain hospital privileges, and to generally meet increasing demands for proof that they have the capability to produce positive outcomes. Moreover, by accrediting institutes, we are ensuring that the advanced education surgeons receive meets the high standards the College has always set for programs bearing its stamp of approval.



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If you have comments or suggestions about this or other issues, please send them to Dr. Russell at [fmp@facs.org](mailto:fmp@facs.org).