

Report of the **Executive Director**

by **Thomas R. Russell, MD, FACS,**
Chicago, IL

It is a real pleasure as I complete my third year as your Executive Director to report to you on the College's activities from my vantage point. I want to point out that this is your College. For the new Initiates, we hope to be your College throughout your whole professional life. We are obviously focusing on making the College relevant to you in the future and really on what is best for the surgical patient. That was Franklin Martin's goal in 1913, and that remains our goal today—to help you deliver better surgical care.

To make the College a more prominent voice for surgery, we need to be able to identify the issues and problems of concern to today's surgeon. I think J. Patrick O'Leary, MD, FACS, in his report on page 28, has nicely summarized for you the issues that the rank-and-file Fellows feel are very important.

To better meet the demands of our Fellows and ensure that the College remains relevant. We began a reorganization of the College two-and-a-half years ago. We went from having 12 separate departments to having four major divisions. So, we created these new divisions, and therefore, we needed some new leaders to head each division.

Ajit Sachdeva, MD, FACS, now leads the Division of Education. He is working to restructure the program planning committees around the medical students, the residents, and the accreditation requirements for continuing medical education. We have also formed four new task forces that are going to address the issues of communications skills, systems-based medicine, practice-based learning, and professionalism. We anticipate that these four task forces will do a great deal to further the educational products that we deliver, once again, with the goal of always helping our members to remain professional throughout their career.

The second division is that of Research and

Optimal Patient Care. This growing area centers on the use of databases and data, clinical trials, best outcomes, and best practices, and I am so pleased that R. Scott Jones, MD, FACS, has accepted the position of division director. I am certain that this division will assist in ensuring that all surgeons can improve their practices based on outcomes and performance data.

We are also trying to increase the activities in Member Services to make this a relevant organization for all of you throughout your career.

The fourth area, of course, is Advocacy and Health Policy. This division basically addresses the systemic problems in medicine today, such as the issues of reimbursement, professional liability, tort reform, and so on—all those issues that, as Dr. O'Leary notes, are so important to surgeons and that surface continually in the Governors' reports.

I want to also acknowledge the staff. As you know, the College staff, both in Chicago and Washington, totals more than 200 individuals. I am certainly indebted to them for their hard work. It is their responsibility to take the Fellows' vision about what the College should do and turn it into action. You have a dedicated,

continued on page 48

Dr. Russell is Executive Director of the College.



REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS, from page 28

Now what about change? A response of one to four in this area meant that the situation had gotten a little better, a five would mean that it hadn't really changed at all, and a response of six through 10 would indicate that the impact had really changed for the worse from last year.

We found that with regard to the issue of physician reimbursement, 88 percent of all Governors who responded rated this issue between six and 10. It is really bad out there, folks, and according to the responses we received, it is getting worse. So now we have been able to say that physician reimbursement is of great concern and the problem is getting worse.

With regard to professional liability, 80 percent of the respondents thought that this issue rated a six to a 10, and oh, by the way, it is getting worse.

Now, for reimbursement and malpractice, I will bet you that most of the people who responded with a one to a four either were in the

military or were from international chapters.

What about Medicare and Medicaid? They were ranked at number three as a concern and, again, 80 percent of the Governors felt that these issues rated between six and 10, and are also getting worse. Of particular concern, based on the respondents' comments, was the 5.4 percent decrease in reimbursement from Medicare this year.

Finally, tort reform closed out the top four issues of concerns, with about 74 percent of the respondents rating it between six and 10. The respondents reported that this problem is no better than it was last year, but it maybe a little bit worse.

So that is how I attempted to modify a little bit the way the Governors reports are submitted. This system, I think, gives us a little stronger handle on what the Governors really feel is having an impact on their practices. □

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, from page 29

hard-working staff, and I am most appreciative of them for helping to implement some of the actions our Fellows believe are necessary.

In this day and age, if I didn't say something about the fiscal affairs of the College, I would not be fulfilling my duties. I can assure you that from my viewpoint and based on my knowledge of our fiscal affairs, the finances of the College are on solid ground. For what it is worth, we have been audited, and we received a clean record from the auditors. Additionally, we retain ownership of four significant buildings, three in Chicago and the Washington Office. We also are well endowed through various activities of the past as well as philanthropic activities. Hence, the College is in a very solid financial position and hopefully will be able to respond to the challenges we will be facing in the future, many of which will be costly but necessary to keep the American College of Surgeons a relevant and pertinent organization.

In conclusion, I want to welcome the approxi-

mately 1,500 Initiates who became Fellows of the College in October and hope that you will have a lifelong relationship with the College. I anticipate that in your professional journey, one that will span more than 20 or 30 years, you will find the College to be a useful organization, one that will allow you to remain true to our patients, true to the Hippocratic Oath, and true to all the elements of professionalism that are so important in this day of great accountability. It will be the College that will have the longest relevance in your career—more than just four years of college and four years of medical school—in terms of enhancing your education, helping you to analyze your practice, and supporting you in changing the system in which we all have to practice.

Finally, I want to thank the Fellows for your participation in the activities of the American College of Surgeons. It is your ideas and your suggestions that provide the basis on which we design and implement our programs. □