

November 2007

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Special Edition: 2008 RAS-ACS Agenda

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Message from the Chair

Welcome to a new year of the Resident and Associate Society of the American College of Surgeons (RAS-ACS). As the new Chair I look forward to serving you over the upcoming months. I would like to offer a **sincere thank-you to Greg Cherr, our immediate past Chair**. Thanks to his leadership and dedication, RAS has seen many outstanding achievements. A few of last year's highlights include the debut of the Residents as Teachers and Leaders course, the Research Fellowship Database, and the Young Surgeon Survey which allowed us to present your concerns to the Board of Regents of the College.

I am very excited about the upcoming year and the many projects we have planned. The resident sessions from the now disbanded Spring Meeting will find a home at the **2008 Clinical Congress in San Francisco**. That program will include the very popular Surgical Jeopardy. Also, the **Second Residents as Teachers and Leaders course** will be held May 2-4, 2008, at ACS Headquarters in Chicago (see <http://www.facs.org/education/residentsasteachersandleaders.html>).

The Executive Committee of RAS is committed to meeting your needs. To this end, I want to hear your concerns and thoughts, and encourage you to respond to our surveys and take advantage of the Web portal to voice your opinions. We need your support to better serve you. **I encourage you to become an active participant in RAS**. This is an exciting time for us and there are many ways to become involved, including becoming a member of one of our four standing committees: **Communications, Education, Issues, and Membership**. Please visit the RAS-ACS Web site (<http://www.facs.org/ras-acsl/index.html>) to learn more about our society and to see the many ways that RAS membership can be of significant benefit to you. Those interested in joining can write to Peg Haar at phaar@facs.org or contact me at tjames@facs.org.

I wish everyone a great holiday season and a blessed New Year.

Ted A. James, MD

Chair, RAS-ACS
Burlington, VT

2007 ACS Clinical Congress Wrap-Up

The 93rd Clinical Congress was a landmark meeting for RAS. The tremendous progress our organization has made in recent years was underscored by the fact that our exiting Chair, Dr. Gregory Cherr, was given the privilege of the podium during the Convocation. This marked the first time that an Initiate was given this great honor, and it began a new tradition at this most inspiring ceremony. As Dr. Cherr stated, **this is an incredibly fulfilling time to be part of our organization.** There are now residents and Fellows sitting on almost every committee of our College, and our voices are not only increasingly heard--they are actively sought. We have an audience with the Board of Regents, and our active participation in major decisions will undoubtedly shape the future of surgery and of the College itself.

During our meeting, **Ted James** succeeded to Dr. Cherr's position as Chair of RAS, and a new Secretary, **Joshua Broghammer**, was elected. New appointees to Advisory Councils include **Carrie Wieneke, Alex Kutikov, Jonathan Chun, and Eric Deshaies.** In addition, we have changed the leadership structure of our standing committees to a two-year succession. The Communications Committee will be led by **Mecker Moller** and **Carlos Mery**; the Education Committee by **Joshua Mammen** and **Randall Craft**; the Issues Committee by **Suzanne Cutter** and **Brian Santin**; and the Membership Committee by **Luke Brewster** and **Raphael El Youssef.**

Our programs at the Congress were also tremendously successful. Hundreds of residents attended the *Primer on Essential Skills for a Surgical Practice* and came away with useful tips on everything from searching for a job to managing finances. An equally impressive number of attendees enjoyed the controversy sparked by our *Symposium*, which explored the impact of pay-for-performance and surgical quality initiatives on surgical training. In addition, Dr. Cherr hosted a very successful session on mentoring, and Dr. James, our current Chair, co-hosted a great session on the increasing involvement of surgeons in advocacy efforts.

Jacob Moalem, MD
Vice-Chair, RAS-ACS
New Brunswick, NJ

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee will continue to **strengthen the voice of RAS-ACS among residents and Associate Fellows of the College, and will inform you about College programs and issues affecting RAS members.** Our committee's key areas of responsibility for this coming year are:

--*July edition of the ACS Bulletin and RAS-ACS Column*

Every year, we are responsible for crafting the special content for the July issue of the *Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons*. The proposed topic for this year is "Teaching the Modern Surgeon." We also plan to begin a regular column in the *Bulletin* featuring articles written by RAS members about the impact of their mentors on their careers.

--*RAS-ACS eNewsletter*

The eNewsletter highlights topics related to the training of surgeons and the practice of surgery, and it notifies RAS members about ACS programs and opportunities to participate in College activities. We expect to publish six or seven editions this year to accommodate the increasing volume of submissions.

--*RAS Web portal and Web page*

A community for residents and Associate Fellows is one of several available through the expanding ACS Web portal, [e-FACS.org](http://www.facs.org). We are actively involved in providing feedback and ideas about new material relevant to our constituents in that community, and we'll continue that effort during 2008. We will also work towards modernizing our RAS-ACS Web page on the College's public Web site, <http://www.facs.org/ras-accs>.

--Survey and informative DVD

The Association of Academic Surgeons (AAS), the Society of University Surgeons (SUS), and the College have allocated funds to create and mail a DVD promoting membership to these organizations. We have been asked to promote this initiative and survey residents in our organization about the information that should be included.

The Communications Committee always welcomes the addition of new members who are interested in writing, editing, and collaborating on our eNewsletter and the July edition of the *ACS Bulletin*. **Join us!** Email your information to mecker.moller@moffitt.org or cmery@partners.org

Mecker G. Möller, MD

Chair, RAS-ACS Communications Committee
Tampa, FL

Issues Committee

During 2008, the Issues Committee plans to build on the success of the annual RAS Symposium held at the Clinical Congress. We understand that there are **many residents and young surgeons who are interested in participating in health care policy activities but may not know how to fit them into their already busy schedule**. Thus, we have added two new thrusts to our offerings for the year. Our committee has three key areas of responsibility:

--RAS-ACS Symposium

Each year during the Clinical Congress, RAS sponsors a symposium on a controversial topic in surgery. Previous topics have included truncated surgical training, acute care surgery, and pay-for performance. We are currently seeking a relevant, contemporary topic of interest to all surgeons for the 2008 Symposium.

--The 5-Minute Health Care Policy Consult

The 5-Minute Healthcare Policy Consult is a scripted communication directed toward government policymakers. Each consult allows the resident and young surgeon to contact his or her senator and member of Congress and communicate a focused message of support for or opposition to a key piece of legislation.

--Health Care Policy Grand Rounds Presentation

All surgeons could use more information on current health care policy. The Issues Committee plans to develop a presentation that can be delivered at any US surgery program's Grand Rounds. Presenting at their program's Grand Rounds will also give RAS residents and young surgeons a valuable experience.

Finally, we hope that through our work, more RAS members will join the ACSPA SurgeonsPAC. The **American College of Surgeons Professional Association (ACSPA)** is a not-for-profit corporation established by the ACS Board of Regents. A major thrust of ACSPA is the operation a political action committee (PAC) that works to improve the legislative and regulatory climate in which surgeons practice. Call 202-672-1520 or e-mail acspsa@facs.org to join.

The Issues Committee is open to the ideas and participation of the RAS membership. Contact us

with your input.

C. Suzanne Cutter, MD
Chair, RAS-ACS Issues Committee
New York, NY

Membership Committee

The goal of the Membership Committee is to **promote membership in the College among residents and young surgeons**. The Membership Committee is very excited about the upcoming year. Our primary goals and initiatives are three:

--RAS Liaison Program

The Membership Committee has liaison residents who work as a bridge between RAS-ACS and their training program. It is our plan to expand this initiative to all surgical training programs in the country. This goal will be accomplished through the hard work of our current liaisons as well as through coordination with surgical training program coordinators.

--Subspecialty surgical resident membership

We aim to increase membership among trainees in subspecialty surgical programs. We plan on promoting the College's program of waiving the membership fee for all residents during their intern year. By allowing residents to experience the benefits of membership during their intern year, we believe that the modest costs they will incur in subsequent years will be seen as worthwhile.

--Medical students

The Membership Committee is investing much effort into the recruitment of medical students (both Canadian/US and international) into the College. Membership provides access to *e-FACS.org*, the College's members-only Web portal, which provide the opportunity to view videos, explore surgical topics, and use the Little Red Book "So, You Want to be a Surgeon," valuable resources for medical students.

We would like to thank the College and RAS-ACS for the opportunity to promote membership to our constituents for the coming year.

Luke Brewster, MD
Chair, RAS-ACS Membership Committee
Oak Park, IL

Raphael El Youssef, MD
Vice-Chair, RAS-ACS Membership Committee
Portland, OR

Education Committee

The focus of the Education Committee is to identify areas in which resources can be produced to **aid resident and associate members in advancing their careers and furthering their education**. Four major projects in varying stages of completion comprise the majority of the agenda:

--International Surgery Survey

The international surgery survey was enormously successful and had a significant response from the membership. The survey sought to describe the attitudes and interest of the RAS membership

in international surgery experiences. The results are currently being analyzed and will be formally presented in the form of a manuscript.

--RAS-ACS Research Fellowship Database

The research fellowship database is envisioned as a centralized clearinghouse for research opportunities. The database is intended to facilitate seeking unique research opportunities throughout the US. Anthea Powell has worked to establish an electronic presence for this database on *e-FACS.org*, and Hannah Zimmerman has taken the helm to continue this work.

--Residency Changes Following the 80-hour week

A new survey to assess the changes that surgical residency programs implemented to adapt to the ACGME mandated 80-hour workweek is currently in the final stages of development. The upcoming survey will aim to identify factors and strategies that worked best for various types of programs, recognizing that programs of varying sizes and types may have different needs. Watch for this survey, which should be out in the next several weeks.

--Clinical Fellowship Guide

While the residency application process for most surgical residencies is now well honed, the application process for clinical fellowships can still remain an enigma. The clinical fellowship guide, a project still in its early stages, will attempt to shed some light in this area by delineating key resources and dates for fellowship applications. The guide currently includes almost 20 specialty fellowship areas and seeks to add more. The guide will ultimately be placed as a resource on *e-FACS.org* for members of RAS.

The Education Committee has a full slate and is always looking for help on any of its ongoing projects. Additionally, new ideas are always welcome. For further information, please feel free to contact me at joshuamammen@yahoo.com.

Joshua M.V. Mammen, MD, MBA
Chair, RAS-ACS Education Committee
Houston, TX

International Medical Graduates Committee

The *ad-hoc* International Medical Graduates (IMG) Committee of RAS has another exciting year ahead of us. This is a young committee in our organization, and we continue to grow and recruit valuable members. Our goals for this upcoming year are to:

--Promote the contribution of IMG surgeons to the US surgical field

--Increase membership of international medical students and residents

--Assist in designing and improving the RAS-ACS Web page to provide answers to common questions for students interested in pursuing a surgical residency in the US and to provide information to facilitate the exchange of residents and young surgeons between US and foreign universities

--Increase awareness of the opportunities that are available by becoming a member of RAS-ACS

--IMG-RAS representation in the International Surgery Society and similar organizations

We look forward to a productive year! We welcome and encourage IMG surgical residents to become members of our committee and collaborate in our projects. If you're interested, please

email us at mecker.moller@moffitt.org and lbrewst@aol.com.

Mecker Möller, MD

Chair, RAS-ACS IMG Committee
Tampa, FL

Your Help is Needed Today! "College Cost Reduction Act," H.R. 2669

Did you know that on September 27, Congress passed H.R. 2669, the College Cost Reduction Act? Did you know that this law could have an **unintended negative financial impact on you and a large number of other residents?**

While H.R. 2669 will eventually create mechanisms for student loan repayment, it abolished the 20/220 pathway, which is the mechanism that currently enables two-thirds of residents to immediately qualify for economic hardship deferment. Instead, this new "financial aid" plan calls for **residents to begin repayment on their loans upon graduation**, and it goes into effect January 1, 2009. For the average resident, this change means an average monthly payment of \$349.

Intense lobbying successfully delayed implementation of this law from October 1 (four days after it was passed) to January 1, 2008. This statutory fix still leaves residents with 12 months devoid of any "financial aid" whatsoever. Moreover, the new plan still calls for residents to immediately begin payment or go into forbearance and allow for the compounding of interest. Many interested groups are continuing to lobby for the reinstatement of the 20/220 mechanism. **Your support of this endeavor is essential; please send your congressman a pre-printed letter through the following Web site <http://capwiz.com/ama/issues/alert/?alertid=10478586&type=co> or call them directly.** More helpful information is available on the American Medical Association (AMA) Web site at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/18024.html>.

Jacob Moalem, MD

Vice-Chair, RAS-ACS
New Brunswick, NJ

About RAS-ACS

The Resident and Associate Society of the American College of Surgeons (RAS-ACS) is an organization within the American College of Surgeons that was formed to benefit young and future surgeons through involvement in the College's activities. Membership in the RAS-ACS is automatic when you become a Resident Member or an Associate Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. Resident membership is open to all surgical residents enrolled in an accredited graduate educational program, surgical research, or fellowship program. Associate Fellow membership is open to young surgeons who are currently engaged in a second surgical residency, a research or a fellowship program, a surgical specialty practice, and are within five years of graduation from formal surgical residency training. Currently, over 2,600 Associate Fellows and 8,000 Residents are part of the RAS-ACS.

Benefits of becoming a RAS-ACS member:

- free *Journal of the American College of Surgeons* subscription
- free *Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons* subscription
- free online *ACS Surgery Textbook*
- free Clinical Congress and access to CME credit
- reduced pricing for selected postgraduate courses at the Clinical Congress
- information on clinical and research fellowship opportunities
- free access to the College's job and resume databank
- electronic newsletter, Web site, and Web portal
- educational materials to meet requirements for board certification
- opportunities to serve on various College committees
- opportunities for local chapter affiliation
- access to ACS-sponsored insurance programs (life, health, disability)
- a voice in advocacy and policy-making issues concerning residents and young surgeons

Join today!

Be Sure to Visit These Important Areas of the ACS Web site:

RAS-ACS Homepage: <http://www.facs.org/ras-acg/index.html>

How to Join RAS-ACS: <http://www.facs.org/ras-acg/membership/membership.html>

Job Bank: http://www.healthcareers.com/site_templates/ACS/index.asp?aff=ACS&SPLD=ACS

ACS Homepage: <http://www.facs.org>

Your Feedback Is Important to Us

We are interested in making sure that the content of *RAS-ACS News* meets the interests and responds to the needs of surgical residents and newly practicing surgeons across the country. Your feedback and ideas are important to us. Please send your comments about this newsletter and your ideas for articles to the Editor at ras-news@facs.org.

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For additional information regarding the benefits and activities of the RAS-ACS, please contact Joan Wellington.

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