

Meeting of the Executive Committee
AANS/CNS Joint Section on Disorders of the Spine and Peripheral
Nerves
Orlando, Florida
February 27, 2002

Dr. McCormick called the meeting to order.

Members present: Dr. Rodts, Dr. Haid, Dr. Dickman, Dr. Lauryssen, Dr. Levi, Dr. Hurlbert, Dr. Alexander, Dr. Branch, Dr. Traynelis, Dr. Heary, Dr. Baldwin, Dr. McCormick, Dr. Harkey, Dr. Fehlings, Dr. Benzel, Dr. Resnick, Dr. Ondra, Dr. McLaughlin, Dr. Gerszten, Dr. DiRisio, Dr. Ryken, Dr. Fessler.

Guest: Dr. Tanvir Choudhri.

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved. Dr. Rodts delivered the treasurer's report. Overall, it appears that the Joint Section is likely to lose money in the current fiscal year. The final tally for the previous fiscal year appeared to show a loss of \$17,000. In the current year the projection is that the loss will be about \$10,000. Dr. Rodts presented a plan to formulate budgets more accurately. At the upcoming AANS meeting, the treasurer, chairman, and chair-elect will meet with AANS officials to formulate the new budget. Specific goals and plans will be formulated and the real budget will be created by May 15th. The basic needs of the organization were discussed including a basic amount that must be kept in available funds. Of the remaining funds, it is planned that a large portion of those will soon be moved to the newly created research endowment.

Dr. McCormick discussed the overall need to seek stable funding sources to cover some of the awards and research grants. Dr. Haid agreed to explore some of the possibilities in that realm.

Dr. Dickman discussed the potential mechanisms for protecting the assets of the Joint Section within the research endowment. Options for the structure of the fund and the structure of the committee to govern it were discussed. The fund officials will seek contributions from corporate and community sources. The start up money for the fund will come from the assets of the Joint Section. Dr. Dickman will serve as the chairman of the committee overseeing the research endowment. The officers of the Joint Section will also be on the committee. Outside direction with inclusion of individuals such as perhaps a retired corporate CEO would be included.

Dr. Benzel presented further plans for the World Spine II meeting. The meeting will be held in Chicago in 2003. It will be in the month of May and will be of three days duration.

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Dr. McCormick discussed the SPORT study. The concerns with this study have to do with the large degree of crossover that is anticipated and the difficulty with use of a very broad hypothesis. There is discussion in essentially all levels of organized spinal surgery to create a "counter study". It is anticipated that a negative outcome in the SPORT trial would result in disastrous consequences for spine surgery as a whole. Dr. Hadley has been discussing working with NASS. Dr. Dunsker is exploring these same avenues through the AANS. Dr. Traynelis pointed out that the 2001 Volvo award winning clinical paper was a Swedish trial very much similar to the SPORT study. That study demonstrated a significant benefit from surgery in comparison with nonsurgical treatment.

Dr. Traynelis delivered the publication committee report. Distribution of the spinal injury guidelines was discussed. A motion was made to empower Dr. Traynelis to select the venues for publication of the guidelines. The committee generally favored broad dissemination of the guidelines.

Dr. Fehlings delivered the research committee report. The results of the evaluation of the proposals were reviewed. Successful applicants included Dr. Gerszten with a \$30,000 award and Dr. Krassioukov with a \$15,000 award.

Dr. Fessler delivered the Washington Committee report. Issues relating to spine fellowship accreditation were also discussed. The criteria adopted by the CAST committee were considered generally less rigorous than what the Joint Section leadership would like to see. It was felt that two members of the CAST committee should be from the Joint Section and should sit on the committee for purposes of representing the Joint Section there. Numerous members of the Joint Section executive committee were harshly critical of the paternalistic view taken by the CAST committee in organizing the accreditation process for fellowships. Terms such as bad faith were used in describing some of the turns of events that have occurred through the formulation of the current fellowship accreditation guidelines. The Joint Section past the following resolution.

The Joint Section on Disorders of the Spine and Peripheral Nerves cannot support the fellowship structure as it currently stands. The structure is not in the best interest of the practice of spine surgery.

Dr. McCormick then charged Dr. Haid with writing a document describing what a fellowship should be in the view of the Joint Section. The committee urged Dr. Baldwin to write a letter to Dr. Weiss as president of the Society of Neurological Surgeons. The letter should include clear delineation that the Joint

Section will not support the fellowship accreditation process as it is presently tendered. Formal involvement by the Joint Section is clearly a must for this proposal to fly. All of the fellowship directors in attendance at the executive committee meeting voiced strong protest to the current proposals and stated that they would not apply under the present system for accreditation.

Dr. Fessler discussed the SPORT study further. The design of the SPORT study was felt to favor the null hypothesis. Dr. Fessler also discussed stem cell research. The current guidelines imposed by the Bush administration were discussed in detail and it is apparent that these guidelines are more restrictive when reviewed from a technical prospective than simple review of the wording would suggest.

Drs. Heary and Alexander then delivered the annual meeting report. Numbers for the special courses were reviewed as well as the meeting registration numbers. The meeting appears to be overall shaping up to be a terrific success. Dr. Alexander reported that a formal poster grading team was in place and awards would be announced during the meeting. Dr. McCormick recognized Drs. Heary and Alexander for their efforts and success in putting together the annual meeting.

Drs. McLaughlin and Haid delivered the exhibits report. The revenues from exhibits this year totaled \$306,000. This is in comparison with \$244,000 generated last year. Drs. Haid and McLaughlin will look for sponsorship for the Larsen and Sonntag Awards in the coming months.

Dr. Heary delivered the education report. The AANS meeting will include a symposium on one afternoon with a single topic followed by delivery of submitted scientific papers. At the congress meeting, there will be one afternoon of plenary session dedicated to the Joint Section. There will also be a second afternoon breakout session in the format that has been the tradition. The issue of writing board exam questions was discussed and Dr. Heary will work with Drs. Benzel and William Rosenberg to generate written exam questions.

Dr. McCormick delivered the future sights report for Dr. Papodopoulos. The Saddlebrook Resort booking for the next annual meeting is completed.

Membership committee report was delivered by Dr. Lauryssen. He reported a slowly increasing membership roll and stressed the importance of recruiting residents to Joint Section membership.

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Dr. Hurlbert discussed dissemination of the spinal injury guidelines. As director of the newsletter, he will be involved in the publication committee's decisions also.

The rules and regulations report was delivered by Dr. DiRisio. The purposed rule change for formulation of the committee to oversee the research endowment was discussed. It was decided that for the time being, the committee will function as an ad hoc committee. When the workings of the committee are better defined, formal rules will be enacted.

Dr. Levi delivered the web site report. He reported that the spinal injury guidelines will be posted on the web site.

Dr. Ryken delivered the awards committee report. He stated that Dr. Paramore is the next chair of the awards committee and the new member to the awards committee will be Dr. Greg Trost.

Coordinating committee - no report. The role of the coordinating committee was discussed. Due to the nature of the roles defined for the affiliated committees, the coordinating committee was felt to probably represent an ineffective role. It was decided that following the completion of the tenure of the current committee chairman, the committee should be eliminated.

Dr. Ryken delivered the guidelines committee report. He raised the question of what project should next be undertaken for guidelines development. He also stressed that he would like to be replaced as chair of the guidelines committee.

The outcomes committee report was delivered by Dr. Gerszten. He reviewed the results of a questionnaire submitted by the committee. He stressed that the membership of the Joint Section clearly would like to see more outcomes information presented at the annual meetings. Dr. McCormick charged Dr. Gerszten with assisting in drafting the framework of an outcomes data collection mechanism for use in the "SPORT counter study".

CPT committee - no report.

Political action committee report was delivered by Dr. Ondra. He emphasized that as fund raising efforts go, we have a great one time contribution record. He emphasized the need to recruit recurring pledge donations that would provide funding in a cyclical basis.

Dr. Resnick delivered the future annual meeting report. He discussed the issue of seeking nursing credit through the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses for the Joint Section

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meeting. He emphasized that making nursing CME credits available would enable the meeting to attract nurse participants who currently cannot attend due to the lack of CME credit.

Dr. McCormick then adjourned the meeting.