

Editorial

The Role of Spine Societies in Clinical Spine Practice

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It is a great honor to participate as a guest editor for the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Spine Practice*, which is affiliated with the Saudi Spine Society. I have closely watched the early years of the relatively young Saudi Spine Society, and have been truly amazed by the growth and the multiple focused initiatives that the society has created. As I watch the tremendous growth of the Saudi Spine Society, I am pondering the purpose of any given spine society in the clinical practice of spine surgeons in any specific region, country, city, spine group, or individual practice. What follows are some personal thoughts on the relationship of spine societies with clinical practice.

One could argue that there are too many spine societies in the world, and that we do not need another society, another meeting, or another set of platforms for research and clinical dissemination. However, this is a self-centered view that does not take into account the viewpoints of others in any given region or represented group. The world today could use a bit more perspective and balance, and a better understanding of the opinions and needs of others. To have such a limited viewpoint that there are too many spine societies simply ignores the different aspects, activities and needs of other groups, and judges those groups simply based on one's limited viewpoint.

Each society has to have a mission statement and purpose, which form the foundation for all of the activities and initiatives of the society. There can be many purposes for any given society. There is education, for a group of practitioners. This can take the form of an annual meeting, to disseminate research and best practices for spine practitioners in the treatment of spinal pathologies. This can serve as a platform for specific groups that may not have the opportunity to present their research or educational findings in one of the more traditional and established spine meetings that take place in other parts of the world. These research and educational offerings may be especially pertinent or a particular priority for those in the home society's targeted group, even if not as much so for others. This group may not be able to travel to other meetings in other global regions easily, or find as much of a collection of relevant content elsewhere as at their own home society meeting.

Spine society meetings also provide a gathering time for the members to interact, network, and secure or develop friendships and collaborations, which are likely more easily performed in a local or geographically regional basis, rather than trying to create a collaboration in other areas of the globe. Long-lasting relationships can perhaps be more easily maintained and fostered in the home society meetings.



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Perhaps in the current pandemic, we realize more the value of face-to-face contact and networking in our education and further career development. The value of this networking to our residents and fellows in their spine education should also not be overlooked. The ability of a given spine meeting to facilitate our practitioners who are in training to have personal contact with regional mentors, and be exposed to fellowship positions and career opportunities for the future is priceless. Countless fellowship positions, recommendations and support, and even job positions, greatly depend on spine society meetings and interactions.

Any given spine society can also bridge gaps in practice, and bring together groups that were typically isolated from each other. An obvious example is the interactions between orthopedic surgeons and neurosurgery colleagues. Spine practice is a collaborative area, and is a junction point with overlap between these two specialties. Many spine meetings serve the purpose of bringing together these two groups, which have traditionally had their own isolated spine meetings, and creating new collaborations and friendships. In reality, this model of having thought-leaders from both specialties is the future of spine surgery and spine meetings. This will hopefully have a collateral effect on specific practices and will create a more collaborative clinical environment within individual clinical practices.

Guidelines incorporating current research and best practices, to drive treatment standards for our patients with spinal disorders, are critical for providing the optimal treatment for our patients, both in conservative and surgical care. Evidence-based guidelines help to minimize complications and optimize outcomes. Many societies look to adopt or endorse current guidelines in order to help standardize care in their region. Others look to create guidelines that apply and are relevant to current geographical practices, which help to promote appropriate spine care. This is critically important, not just for optimizing clinical care, but also for working with local government and insurance carriers to improve the art of medicine in the region.

Finally, any society is just an abstract name or entity, but the real value of any society comes from the individuals involved in the leadership and guidance of the organization. Every society that I have been involved with has collected an amazing group of spine practitioners that has driven the activities and the very purpose of the society. The Saudi Spine Society has groups in leadership and membership that are simply amazing. I am confident in my own personal opinion that the Saudi Spine Society is forward-thinking and one of the premier groups in the world today, and I personally believe that they lead the world in being truly collaborative. I am honored to collaborate with this amazing group of spine practitioners.