

# A Conversation With AAOS President Joseph D. Zuckerman, MD

Peter D. McCann, MD

**M**y friend and neighbor in New York, Joseph D. Zuckerman, MD, Chairman of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at NYU Hospital for Joint Diseases, was sworn in as the 77th President of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) at the annual meeting in Las Vegas on February 26, 2009. In a recent conversation, we discussed his major focus during his year of leadership of the Academy.

I asked Joe how one person could affect the course of the massive “ship of state” that is the AAOS. He described two factors that guide our organization. The first is the strategic plan developed in 2005 by the AAOS Board of Directors that outlined 9 specific goals designed to enhance the mission of the AAOS (see: <http://www.aaos.org/member/mbrsvc/strategicplan.asp>). The second factor is the presidential line within the Board of Directors, consisting of President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, immediate Past President, and non-voting CEO, which provides a clear governance platform to ensure continuity and focus in order to achieve the Academy’s strategic goals.

Hence, as current AAOS President, Joe says, “My responsibility is to steer our ship in the right direction.” However, while at the helm, each Academy President is encouraged to pursue 1 of the 9 strategic goals of particular interest to him as his focus for the year. During their tenures, recent Presidents Jim Beaty (2007) and Tony Rankin (2008) focused on education and advocacy, respectively. Joe’s focus this year will be on practice management.



**“...we face  
unprecedented  
changes in  
how medical  
costs are  
financed in  
this country....”**

Dr. McCann is Editor-in-Chief of this journal and Chair, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, New York.

*Am J Orthop.* 2009;38(7):328. Copyright 2009, Quadrant HealthCom, Inc. All rights reserved.

Several reasons account for Joe’s interest in practice management, as detailed in his presidential address.<sup>1</sup> The first is that we have told him so. Recent polls of Academy members rank practice management among their highest priorities. Consequently, the AAOS has greatly expanded the range and number of practice management programs offered to its members. Second, as practitioners, we face unprecedented changes in how medical costs are financed in this country, especially as the Obama administration tackles health-care reform. Third, the 2007 Department of Justice deferred-prosecution agreements have fundamentally altered the relationship between orthopedic surgeons and the orthopedic device industry, which, in turn, will alter the funding of orthopedic education and research. Since many academic programs fund resident education and research with direct industry support, loss of this direct support will place greater pressure on efficient practice management in academic departments. Thus, academic departments will embrace the same efficient practice management principals that guide our colleagues in private practice.

We are very fortunate to have Joe at the helm of our “ship of state.” He brings to the Presidency a vast set of skills as administrator, educator, researcher, and, most importantly, practitioner. This skill set, coupled with his ironic, self-deprecating style and tireless efforts on our behalf, makes him an ideal skipper of our AAOS ship—plying turbulent waters in these challenging economic times.

## Reference

1. Zuckerman JD. Silk purses, sows’ ears, and heap ash—turning challenges into opportunities. *J Am Acad Orthop Surg.* 2009;17(5):271-275.