Chair Message

John Ratliff, MD

Dear Colleagues,

It has been a year since I had the honor of being elected Chair of the Council of State Neurosurgical Societies (CSNS). Reflecting on this period, I am immensely proud of the progress we have made and the unwavering dedication of our members. Serving alongside a team of volunteer neurosurgeons who tirelessly advocate for our specialty has been a profoundly rewarding experience.

The CSNS continues to be the grassroots body for all neurosurgeons. Our delegates bring forth resolutions addressing the pressing issues in neurosurgical practice. These resolutions are debated by members representing state societies and caucuses for our parent organizations. Once passed, these resolutions guide our parent organizations, the AANS and CNS, in their actions, reinforcing our role as the voice for practicing neurosurgeons in the United States.

This past year, we have tackled numerous critical issues. We have made significant strides in addressing prior authorization challenges and retroactive denials, advocating for our members through data-driven initiatives. Our research on the impact of telehealth has informed national advocacy efforts, and our surveys on gun legislation have ensured that our advocacy truly reflects the views of our members. Furthermore, our resolutions on narrow networks, surprise billing, and access to neurosurgical services have directly influenced the activities of our AMA delegation, providing a strong foundation for our work in the House of Delegates.

One of the highlights of the past year was our collaborative effort with the Surgical Care Coalition to minimize Medicare cuts for practicing neurosurgeons. The CSNS, along with the AANS, CNS, the Joint Section on Disorders of the Spine and Peripheral Nerves (DSPN), and the Cerebrovascular Section, played a pivotal role in this campaign. Many CSNS members actively contributed to this cause, demonstrating our collective commitment to protecting the financial viability of neurosurgical practice.

The CSNS also plays a crucial role in developing future leaders within our specialty. Our medical student socioeconomic summer fellowships and resident fellowships provide invaluable opportunities for education and mentorship. As Chair, I am committed to ensuring that every resident with an interest in socioeconomics knows they are welcome to learn and participate in our meetings.

Our specialty continues to face numerous challenges, including hospital consolidation, downward pressure on reimbursements, stringent prior authorization rules, narrow networks, a broken medical liability system, burdensome quality reporting requirements, and inefficient electronic health records. These challenges limit our ability to provide the care our patients deserve. However, I am continually inspired by the energy, intelligence, and insight of our members.

I am excited to see what we will accomplish together in the coming year. I invite all of you to join us in our mission to advance the field of neurosurgery, improve patient care, and support our members in their professional and personal lives.