

American Society of Spine Radiology: The First Decade

Pierre C. Milette and A. Orlando Ortiz

As a result of a discussion held during the 1992 RSNA meeting, 37 senior members of the ASNR involved in spinal imaging were sent a questionnaire regarding their interest in forming a spinal imaging society under the auspices of the ASNR. All 37 respondents were in favor. A constitution was subsequently drafted, using the constitution of the ASPNR as a template. The first organizational meeting took place on May 19, 1993, at the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. All ASNR members with an interest in the planning and development of a spine subspecialty society under the auspices of the ASNR were invited to attend. A motion for the formation of a spinal imaging society, presented by J. Randy Jinkins and seconded by Norman E. Leeds, was passed unanimously. A steering committee was elected: Jeffrey S. Ross (president), Victor M. Haughton (vice-president), and J. Randy Jinkins (secretary). The initial membership list consisted of 151 senior ASNR members. The name “Society for Spine Radiology” was agreed upon by majority vote at the ASNR Annual Business Meeting on May 5, 1994, at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, and a draft of the constitution and bylaws, prepared by Pierre C. Milette and Stephen L.G. Rothman, was discussed.

In the March 1995 edition of the newsletter *Gray Matter*, James G. Gantenberg, executive director of the ASNR, announced that the Society of Spine Radiology (SSR) had applied for and received recognition as a subspecialty group headquartered at the ASNR offices in Oak Brook, Illinois. The initial name of the organization was short lived! At the 3rd Annual Business Meeting, on April 26, 1995, at the Sheraton Hotel in Chicago, the society’s constitution was revised by the Ad Hoc Constitution and Bylaws Committee (S.L.G. Rothman and P.C. Milette). The revised document was unanimously approved, and the name of the society was changed to the American Society of Spine Radiology, or ASSR. A list of members, circulated in July 1995, indicated a membership of 196 individuals.

The 1996 ASSR president, Pierre C. Milette, signed an agreement with Jim Gantenberg regarding the nature and conditions of administrative support provided by ASNR. With the collaboration of Bonnie Mack and Susan Shannon, staff members of the ASNR central office, he created the necessary documents (information flyers, application forms, member certificates) and drew a logo for the society that was

adopted by the executive committee during the 1996 RSNA meeting. He also concluded an agreement with Michael Huckman, editor of the *American Journal of Neuroradiology*, determining that the *AJNR* become the official journal of ASSR. Dale A. Charletta constructed the ASSR website (<http://www.asnr.org/assr>; now also available at www.TheASSR.org).

With the assistance of Robert W. Jahnke, J. Randy Jinkins, the 1997 ASSR president and scientific committee program chairman, organized the first ASSR Symposium, in Cancun, Mexico. Tragically, Dr. Jahnke died unexpectedly a few days before the opening of this landmark event that was held at the Fiesta Americana Coral Beach Resort Hotel (March 18–21, 1998). Dr. Jinkins also created *The Myelon*, a newsletter to be periodically distributed to ASSR members. A strategic plan was elaborated by the 1998 ASSR president, Alan L. Williams. Mr. Ken Cammarata replaced Susan Shannon as ASSR business manager, and the 2nd ASSR Symposium was held in Naples, Florida, February 15–17, 1999.

The third ASSR Symposium was held in Marco Island, Florida, on February 21–23, 2000. The president, M. Judith Donovan Post, added a new feature that was in fact the highlight of the meeting: interventional spine workshops led by experienced instructors, including spine mannequins and C-arm fluoroscopic units. The 4th ASSR Symposium was also held in Marco Island, on February 19–23, 2001. Interactive workshops, organized by President Wade Wong, were again an important highlight of the meeting. Vice-President John M. Mathis worked extensively on the development of standards of practice for various spine interventional procedures during that year.

ASSR president John M. Mathis organized the 5th ASSR Symposium at the Atlantis Resort, in Paradise Island, Bahamas, on February 25–28, 2002. During that year, past president Pierre C. Milette obtained ASNR endorsement for “Nomenclature and Classification of Lumbar Disk Pathology,” jointly proposed by an ASSR ad hoc nomenclature committee and a clinical task force of the North American Spine Society (NASS), chaired by David F. Fardon, an orthopedic spine surgeon. This work has since been endorsed by other American and European societies.

The ASSR held its 10th Annual Business Meeting on May 13, 2002, at the Vancouver Convention Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia. ASSR president A. Orlando Ortiz worked with the ASSR executive committee to secure the society’s representation and

involvement in the American College of Radiology. The ACR approved a motion that now enables two ASSR members to serve as representatives at the annual ACR meeting. The ASSR has achieved funding for research and educational activities and awarded grants and awards to young investigators. These funding sources include the ASSR Mentor Program and the Neuroradiology Education and Research Foundation. A new ASSR-sponsored program, the Mentor Program, chaired by M. Judith Donovan-Post, was created to support and increase spine-related research. The ASSR made a substantial financial contribution, and became a participant in the Neuroradiology Education and Research Foundation. As the ASSR completes its 10th year, the society continues to grow.

The society is now includes more than 500 active

U.S. and international members from diverse backgrounds, offering a broad base of talents in imaging and intervention. The ASSR has produced and supported educational programs and practica on spine imaging and intervention that have strengthened the practice of spine radiology.

In the upcoming year, the society will focus on initiatives to increase membership and meeting attendance and to improve standing and visibility as a leading educational and scientific society. The website is undergoing an overhaul that will make it more accessible to its members as well as patients and physicians in other specialties. Substantial corporate support is being organized to initiate and sustain the Mentor Award Program and to provide fellowship funding for future research initiatives in spine research.