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Brian C. Bowen, PhD, MD, FACR, 11th President of the American Society of Spine Radiology

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Brian C. Bowen, PhD, MD, FACR, 11th President of the American Society of Spine Radiology

On May 26, 2005, Brian Bowen was installed as the 11th President of the ASSR. With Dr. Bowen, the Society has as its President not only a distinguished neuroradiologist but a researcher who is grounded in the basis of modern neuroimaging and in the scientific method. It is not difficult for me to write this short biographical sketch of Brian because I have had the pleasure of working with him as a colleague for the past 16 years in our department.

Brian is a Southern Californian by birth and has bounced back and forth from the West Coast to the East Coast, with no stops in the heartland at any point in his career. Born in San Bernardino to a mother who was a homemaker and a father who was a dentist, Brian distinguished himself as a serious student throughout his upbringing and in 1964 entered Stanford University as a chemical engineering student. Continuing on this track of chemistry and engineering Brian obtained a master of science in chemical engineering in 1970 from the University of Washington, a PhD in chemistry in 1977 from the University of California, San Diego, and spent 2 years thereafter as a postdoctoral fellow at Princeton University. Brian's early publications resulting from his postgraduate work include: "*DNA fragments associated with chromosomal scaffolds*;" "*The detection of DNA binding proteins by protein blotting*;" "*Improvements in instrumentation for viscoelastometry of DNA solutions*;" "*Molecular weight of T2 NaDNA from viscoelasticity*;" and "*Electron microscopy of membrane-free folded chromosomes from Escherichia coli*."

This educational background and published papers are mentioned to emphasize the scientific depth of the current ASSR President and give an insight into how these types of investigations influenced Brian's future research in imaging.

The change from pure science to a career in medicine evolved during the 2 years while Brian was at Princeton. He always considered himself a physical biochemist and this undoubtedly explains Brian's early interest in and contributions to the field of MR spectroscopy. As a graduate student and as a postdoc not only did his work increasingly involve biologic systems but the opportunities to apply his experience and knowledge were surprisingly limited in distinguished university programs. Having heard of the accelerated MD program at the University of Miami, designed for those who already had been granted a PhD degree, Brian applied for and was accepted into that program. Following this highly intense 28-month medical school curriculum, he left Miami with an MD degree and returned to California for a medical internship at Los Angeles County Hospital. Through-



out his medical training Brian knew that given his background his future was in radiology, so for both personal and academic reasons he returned to Miami. He chose a residency position at Mt. Sinai Medical Center because that department had one of the first MR scanners in the country (a 0.35T Siemens system). Following that residency Brian entered the training program at the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Medical Center as a neuroradiology fellow and at the completion of that year's fellowship he accepted an appointment as a faculty member at the University of Miami in 1989.

Brian quickly became one of the most academically productive members of our faculty and tackled the most problematic areas in neuro imaging: brachial and sacral plexus imaging; spinal vascular anatomy on MR angiography (MRA); MR spectroscopy (MRS); and peripheral neurography, just to name a few. There was never an intellectual task that he did not tackle with accuracy, enthusiasm, and total dedication. Brian's publication record runs the gamut from original investigative work including topics in head and neck radiology, original observations in ALS, techniques to improve peripheral nerve imaging, detailed analysis of the veins of the spinal cord, and improved techniques for MRS. When asked what he feels has been his most important contribution to radiology, Brian unhesitatingly said it was the detailed analysis of the normal spinal vessels in MRA (*AJNR Am J Neuroradiol* 1996;17:483-494). That article unquestionably is a landmark paper in neuroradiology, and as the late John Doppman said, ". . . it will stand as a classic article in an area where very little has been

written." He has mentored residents, fellows and junior faculty members always with an eye toward absolute scientific integrity. If anyone ever wants to see how the ideal manuscript review should be structured, they need look no further than to his precise and insightful reviews. An editor's life is made far simpler when a paper has been reviewed by Dr. Bowen. As Brian's PhD advisor at UCSD once told him, "Always take advantage of your training in physical chemistry"; these are words that Brian has never forgotten.

Despite all of these accomplishments, Brian has time for a number of outside interests including cycling, tennis, golf, and most importantly nurturing his 2 children, Christopher (18 years old) and Kathy (16 years old). Christopher will be following in his father's footsteps entering Stanford University this year, as a science major. Kathy has struck her own degree of notoriety by being widely recognized as the top girl's debater in the country (a law degree no doubt looms somewhere in her future). I personally will attest to Brian's ability in golf; I have been beaten solidly a number of times by him. He was on the Stanford University golf team his first year in college but stud-

ies forced him to leave the team. Brian has one sibling, a younger brother Harry, who teaches in the Business School affiliated with the Catholic University of Leuven and the University of Ghent, Belgium; a good excuse for travels to Europe.

For this upcoming year Brian has built a strong meeting for the ASSR in Las Vegas in February and for the spine segment of the ASNR in San Diego. There will be emphasis on outcome measurements in vertebroplasty and kyphoplasty, newer treatments for degenerative disk disease, and highlights in the latest advances in MR imaging (MRA, fMR, tractography) as applied to the spine. ASSR-sponsored mentoring of research in spine and spinal cord imaging will be a focus to hopefully allow the development of future investigators in this field.

Brian has long remembered the words of his father who told him years ago that, "The greatest professional reward you can have in life is the respect of your peers." That Brian has in abundance.

ROBERT M. QUENCER, MD
Editor-in-Chief