SVS President Kim Hodgson, MD, took over the leadership reins of the Society for Vascular Surgery during the 2019 Vascular Annual Meeting in June. He discusses his upcoming year as president in a series of questions and answers below.

Q. What are top priorities you want to address? You have been stressing quality – why good outcomes are no longer good enough, government perspective, practice guidelines and appropriate use criteria, for example – will this continue? What can SVS do about the topic? Are there outcomes you will work towards?

A. Like it or not, the care that we render to our patients is coming under greater scrutiny from governmental regulators, healthcare insurers and even our patients themselves. No longer is it enough to just be technically competent, we must now also be good stewards of our healthcare system’s resources. This requires us to know more than simply how to perform a revascularization, but also when and when not to even do so, as well as which revascularization option is best for any given patient. Vascular surgeons are well-positioned to flourish in this new environment since only we have the full scope of diagnostic and therapeutic options in our armamentarium. Over the past decade the SVS has developed an infrastructure to support the delivery of such evidence-based quality care, beginning with our Patient Safety Organization and its Vascular Quality Initiative. The SVS VQI has a track record of identifying best practices and educating our members about them so that they can transition the care they provide to their patients as our knowledge evolves. We are further supplementing that with our new SVS Quality Council and the development of Appropriate Use Criteria. These instruments of quality improvement are the foundation of our next launch, the Vascular Center Verification and Quality Improvement program, a collaboration with the American College of Surgeons that aims to ensure that our patients receive the right care, at the right time, in the right location, and delivered by the right physicians, that being those physicians dedicated to these principles.

Q. What other issues and challenges stand out for your attention?

A. The vascular space is composed of physicians from a variety of backgrounds who need to work collaboratively for the greater good of our patients, regardless of each physician’s individual heritage. The SVS is actively engaged in collaborative initiatives with our colleagues in other specialties who share our patient-focused core values to move the needle in the right direction for all patients, regardless of who provides their vascular care. Overcoming the traditional intra-specialty rivalries, however, will be necessary to fully achieve this objective.

Q. What advice would you give our members as you and they look down the road to the future?

A. Much of the vascular care we are delivering today bears little resemblance to that which I was trained in some 30 years ago. So it is vital that we all maintain open minds about new therapeutic alternatives as they are developed, but
also continue to hold to the standard of evidence-based decision-making. While many of today’s patients benefit from the technological advancements of the past few decades, some continue to be best treated by the time-tested techniques of open surgical reconstruction, and vascular surgeons should not shy away from that reality.

Q. What would you like your presidency remembered for?

A. Truthfully, anyone’s SVS presidential year is simply a small piece of their overall contribution to the specialty of vascular surgery over the span of their careers. In my case I hope to be remembered as someone who embraced the transition to endovascular care early on and was willing to stand up for that belief despite significant opposition from the academic vascular surgery community at that time. My willingness to do so was rooted in my “call them as I see them” personality and the fact that I didn’t fear offending the established vascular surgery authorities. Never envisioning myself attaining what is now the pinnacle of my career, the presidency of the Society for Vascular Surgery, I did not feel that I was putting any career goal in jeopardy by speaking my truth. We must all be willing to speak our truth.

(Vascular Specialist will present brief profiles of the 2019-20 SVS officers in the September issue.)

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