

RECAPPING TEXAS

BILL BRESNIHAN, CFA, CSA, FAST, ASA PRESIDENT

The 11th annual meeting of the Association of Surgical Assistants (ASA) and the 41st Annual National Conference of the Association of Surgical Technologists (AST) were held in conjunction this year, in Grapevine, Texas. This meeting of the ASA was very significant, as it was a meeting filled with many historic events for our newly restructured association.

The ASA meeting was the first ever to have been presided over by a Board of surgical assistants. The ASA Board members are a diverse collection of practioners, educators and innovators. During the historic first business meeting of the ASA, I was honored and proud to introduce the new ASA Board members to all in attendance.

AST President Sherri Alexander, CST, and the entire AST Board of Directors were present for the inaugural business meeting. The meeting started with President Alexander presenting an engraved gavel to the ASA. This gavel will be

used during all future meetings of the ASA, and it also serves to symbolize the alliance of the AST and the ASA.

The ASA President's report was presented to the attendees. The full text is available for review at www.surgicalassistant.org. Click on *About ASA*. The report highlights the significant progress made by the ASA Board, during its first several months of existence. In a very

short time, many of our visions have been turned into reality, and with the support of the surgical assisting community, we will do some pretty amazing things for our members.

In May of this year, I was extended the honor of speaking at the National Surgical Assistants Association (NSAA) Annual Conference, in Washington, DC. My message to their members was that the new ASA is strictly a member organization aspiring to unite the common goals and needs of surgical assistants. I was warmly received by NSAA President Dave Janette, CSA, and I extended an invitation for him to attend our conference. Although he was unable to attend, Luis Aragon, CSA, NSAA secretary, affirmed the NSAA's support for our efforts. It is our intent to nourish this relationship not only with NSAA but also with SA-Cs and the American Board of Surgical Assistants (ABSA).

The new ASA *Bylaws* have been drafted and are also available for



Sherri Alexander, CST, AST President and Bill Bresnihan, CFA, CSA, FAST, ASA President

review at www.surgicalassistant.org. Click *About ASA*. Members are asked to review the *ASA Bylaws* and forward comments and concerns. At next year's business meeting, the new *ASA Bylaws* will be formally adopted.

Also, during the AST Conference, there were numerous educational offerings targeted for surgical assistants. On Saturday, May 29, the focus was on issues specific to surgical assistants. A legislative update was presented by Catherine Sparkman, AST Director of Governmental Affairs. This update was comprehensive and provided a clear look into the issues facing our industry. A surgical assisting billing and reimbursement program was offered as well as an analysis of employment opportunities and a panel discussion.

On November 1, 2010, a shoulder surgery cadaver lab will be offered in Naples, Florida, at the Arthrex Corporation. This is the first cadaver lab ever offered by the ASA, and we are proud to be raising the educational bar with these programs. Details of this lab are currently posted on the ASA website, www.surgicalassistant.org.

Next year, at the upcoming conference in San Francisco, the ASA is hoping to offer two, new hands-on opportunities.

The day preceding the ASA conference, ASA has tentatively arranged to offer two skills labs offsite with transportation provided. One lab will be held at Intuitive Surgical's headquarters to train on the daVinci surgical robot. The day-long lab will include both didactic and hands-on sessions.

Three specialty tracks are under discussion. Final details are still being worked out.

The other hands-on learning event will be lab located at Arthrocare Corporation's headquarters. Details will be available soon. These educational programs will ensure that our mem-

bers acquire state-of-the-art skills, knowledge and experience.

As the ASA gains momentum, I encourage all of you to get involved. Your membership is wanted and so is your participation. In less than a year, we have accomplished great things, but there is still much to do.

ASA MEMBERSHIP HAS VALUE FOR YOU AND YOUR CAREER!

Making the decision to join ASA represents your commitment to your career and our profession.



Your benefits will include:

Free tracking and archiving of your continuing education credits

Annual CE summary

ASA News (print and electronic)

AST Journal

Reduced registration fees for labs and workshops

Legislative support and updates

Reduced fees for online continuing education packet (coming fall)

ASA Discussion Board/Blog

Access to results from practitioner surveys

Resume posting (coming soon)

Reduced rates for home/auto insurance

Reduced T-Mobile cell phone package

Access to affordable malpractice insurance

Branded credit card

In addition, your support will help launch a national organization that is targeted to the needs and interests of all surgical assistants, CSFAs, CSAs and SA-Cs. Such an endeavor won't occur overnight, but your commitment will help to ensure our eventual success. Join now and help us advance the profession of surgical assisting.

A membership application is available on pages 6-7.

REIMBURSEMENT FOR SURGICAL ASSISTANT SERVICES TO MEDICARE PATIENTS

CATHY SPARKMAN, AST DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Over 43 million people (including over 36 million people over the age of 65) are enrolled in Medicare, making that population a significant consumer of surgical care in the United States. However, only specific surgical practitioners are eligible for Medicare reimbursement for surgical first assistant services.

Medicare Part A

This component of Medicare reimbursement applies only to facility reimbursement for services rendered to Medicare patients. Calculation of the facility fee for a surgical service, for example, is achieved through the Medicare prospective payment system, whereby reimbursement for a hospital's expenses is calculated in advance, taking into account the procedure, its acuity, the location of the facility and numerous other factors. Surgical assistants employed by hospitals are not entitled to direct reimbursement for their services under Medicare Part A, but their participation in various surgeries is contemplated in Part A reimbursement based on factors used in the PPS methodology. The fee is paid to the hospital and, assumedly, the hospital uses the fee to hire and retain surgical assistant employees.

Medicare Part B

This component of Medicare reimbursement applies to medical professionals recognized and eligible for Medicare reimbursement. In the surgical setting, physicians and certain non-physician providers

(NPPs) are eligible for Medicare reimbursement under Part B. NPPs currently recognized by Medicare are: nurse practitioners, physician assistants, clinical nurse specialists, and nurse midwives. Registered nurse first assistants and surgical assistants (whether certified or not) are not recognized as NPPs under Medicare Part B. Medicare billing regulations do not permit non-NPPs to submit claims to Medicare, and they are not entitled to obtain a Medicare provider number. Any attempt to submit a claim for reimbursement for services to a Medicare beneficiary is a violation of the Federal False Claims Act, which carries strict civil and criminal penalties for violation.

Other insurance for Medicare beneficiaries

Two other forms of insurance are available for Medicare beneficiaries to pay for medical services not covered by Medicare. Medicare beneficiaries may purchase a commercial supplemental insurance policy which provides for payment of Medicare-approved charges that remain after Medicare has paid.

Secondary insurance policies are sometimes purchased by Medicare beneficiaries to offset the balance of medical costs not covered by Medicare. These private insurance policies may or may not be limited to Medicare eligible expenses; and they are governed by state law.

Steps for seeking reimbursement from Medicare beneficiaries' secondary insurance

As stated, a privately employed (physician-employed) or independent surgical assistant filing a claim for reimbursement from Medicare for services provided to a Medicare beneficiary risks prosecution under the Federal False Claims Act. This is true whether the surgical assistant files a claim only for the purposes of obtaining a denial of the claim, so that he or she may pursue secondary insurance. However, certain Medicare carriers recognize a process for obtaining a "denial letter," which may enable the surgical assistant to pursue reimbursement from the Medicare beneficiary's secondary insurance. The process involves writing a letter to the carrier seeking a letter of denial, without

submitting a claim, for the purposes of billing another insurance plan. The letter should be accompanied by the Form 1500, along with the surgical assistant's credentials. Item 33 of Form 1500 should explicitly state that the submission is "for denial only," and item 27 (assignment of benefits) should be checked, "no" to further underscore that the Form 1500 is not being submitted for the purposes of filing a claim. Medicare should then furnish an EOB for submission to the secondary insurer. Sometimes Medicare sends the EOB directly to the beneficiary; follow-up with the patient may be necessary. The surgical assistant may then file the Medicare EOB along with the appropriate claim forms, to the secondary insurer. An explanatory letter explaining the billing may assist in processing the claim. Depending on state law or local business practices, Medicare secondary (private) insurers may not be obligated to pay for surgical assistant services.

BILLING THE MEDICARE BENEFICIARY DIRECTLY

Medicare patients are entitled to know whether ancillary services, or even surgical services, are being provided within the reimbursement construct of their Medicare insurance. This does not mean that a surgical assistant may not bill the Medicare patient directly. However, certain important, required steps must be taken before billing the patient directly. The patient must sign a preoperative financial obligation note and Advance Beneficiary Notice (ABN) to enable the surgical assistant to bill. And, the bill for services must be at the appropriate Medicare rate. A financial discussion with the Medicare patient before the surgery is imperative.

MEDICARE FEE FOR SERVICE CLAIMS CONTRACT DIRECTORY

Visit the Legislative page of the ASA website and click on the link.

ASA BILLING AND REIMBURSEMENT PANEL HIGHLIGHTS

KATHY DUFFY, CFA

The ASA Billing and Reimbursement Panel two-hour presentation during the 41st AST Annual National Conference in Grapevine, Texas, was attended by approximately 100 practitioners.

The panel was opened with a greeting from interim ASA Board President, Bill Bresnihan, CFA, CSA, FAST. Additional panel participants included Luis Aragon, CSA, SurgBill, Inc; Gary Hargreaves, NIFA Medical Billing; Eileen Crigler, CFA; and Kathy Duffy, CFA;

The first presentation, "Congratulations, You're a CFA," was lead by Kathy Duffy, CFA, who focused on navigating through the process of developing a surgical assisting business based on her personal experiences. Topics included credentialing, NPI numbers and Tax ID numbers.

Next up was Gary Hargreaves, who explained the billing process and presented the information needed to be able to process claims for payment. He thoroughly reviewed the steps to filling out a 1500 claim form. His presentation was directed toward new practitioners and experienced practitioners, who were unfamiliar with the process of billing.

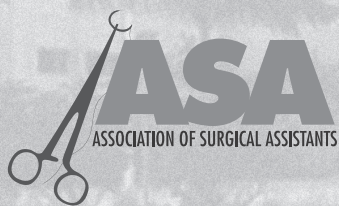
The third presentation was provided by Luis Aragon, CSA, who provided information for the more experienced practitioners, including strategies for appealing a claim, and he identified the relevant steps in the process.

Following these presentations, Eileen Crigler, CFA, joined the panel for open questions from the audience.

Many questions were posed regarding reimbursement by Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) were at the forefront. States that have licensure (Texas, Kentucky) are reimbursed by BCBS, but practitioners in states that do not have licensure will not be issued a BCBS provider number.

The use of an Informed Consent was discussed. The Informed Consent is to be signed by the patient prior to surgery and informs the patient that his/her insurance company may or may not pay for the services of the surgical assistant, and that by signing the form, he/she agrees to pay the fee that the insurance company does not. It was recommended that Informed Consent forms should not be generic. Each Informed Consent form should identify the surgeon performing the surgery.

On the Healthcare Reform Bill, Luis Aragon addressed the future of the CFA, potential reimbursement of the CFA by Medicare/Medicaid and the future of insurance companies.



Continuing education credits earned are applicable to renewal of the CSFA, CSA and SA-C credentials.

EARN 7 CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS AT THE ASA-SPONSORED CADAVER LAB

November 1, 2010 | Naples, Florida

For the first time, the Association of Surgical Assistants and Arthrex, Inc. are partnering to offer an orthopedic cadaver lab at the Arthrex headquarters facility.

This is a comprehensive course on shoulder anatomy, pathology and a variety of common arthroscopic and open surgical procedures. The program will start with a detailed review of shoulder anatomy, followed by identification of common shoulder disorders observed during diagnostic shoulder arthroscopy. Surgical repair techniques will be taught during the lectures and then attendees will have the opportunity to perform these techniques in the cadaver lab.

The lab sessions will cover basic shoulder arthroscopy, acromioplasty, labral repair, Bankart reconstruction, biceps tenolysis and rotator cuff repairs. Following the arthroscopic session, the lab's focus will shift to total shoulder replacement and shoulder hemi-arthroplasty.

Brian Hanypsiak, MD, director of medical education, Arthrex, Inc. will be the lead presenter and will be assisted by other practitioners. Three attendees will be assigned to each station in the lab.

Registration Information

Deadline for discounted registration is September 30. An additional \$50 will be added to registrations made between October 1-15. No registrations accepted after October 15, 2010.

Attendance is limited. Confirmation will be mailed upon receipt of registration and payment. No registration is available after October 15, 2010. All cancellations must be received in writing by September 15, 2010.

With the limited space available, cancellations after September 15, 2010 will not be eligible for a refund. Refund of registration fee minus \$50.00 processing fee will be sent two to four weeks after the event.

Fees

Must be registered by September 30.
 ASA Members: \$399, Nonmembers: \$499
 Registrations received from October 1-15:
 ASA Members: \$449, Nonmembers: \$549

Accommodations

Arthrex has arranged with local hotels for specially discounted corporate rates. Call directly to reserve and identify yourself as an Arthrex Inc. participant.

Bellaserra:

\$129/night plus tax, single occupancy
 221 Ninth Street S, 239-649-7333

Inn on Fifth:

\$89/night plus tax, single occupancy
 699 5th Avenue S, 239-403-8777



Lab location

Arthrex, Inc.
 1370 Creekside Blvd
 Naples, FL 34108-1945



AGENDA	November 1, 2010
8 am	Introduction
9 am	Lecture
10 am-Noon	Lab (shoulder instability, SAD, DCE)
Noon-1 pm	Lunch (provided)
1-2 pm	Lecture
2-4 pm	Lab (rotator cuff repair, dissection)

CADAVER LAB FEES (includes lecture presentations, lab and materials and lunch)	Before October 1, 2010	October 1-15, 2010
ASA Member	\$399	\$449
Nonmember	\$499	\$549

- Register online at www.surgicalassistant.org, click on 2010 cadaver lab registration.
- Mail completed registration to: ASA, 6 W Dry Creek Cir, Littleton, CO 80120.
- Register by phone: 800-637-7433, ext 2514 (8 am-5 pm, MT).

Date: _____ ASA Member #: _____

Name (please print): _____ Title: CFA CSA SA-C CST Other: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Email: _____

Credit card billing address (if same as above, leave blank):

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Money order/check enclosed for \$ _____ (no purchase orders accepted)

VISA MasterCard AmEx No: _____ Expiration Date: _____ Total amount charged: \$ _____

Name as it appears on card: _____ Signature: _____



Membership Application

Association of Surgical Assistants • www.surgicalassistant.org
6 West Dry Creek Circle • Suite 200 • Littleton, CO 80120-8031
Phone: 800.637.7433, option 3 • Fax: 303.694.9169
memserv@surgicalassistant.org

Last Name _____ First _____ MI _____
Address _____ Apt # _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____
Have you ever been a member of ASA? No Yes, under the name of _____
Email _____
I was recruited by: _____ (member's name), _____ (membership #)

MEMBERSHIP DUES Membership categories and discounted first-time CFA exam bundles explained on the back of this form.

Please check the appropriate choice for membership dues or bundle.

Active...\$150

Copy of your credential must be submitted for verification.

Credential Held: CFA = NBSTSA CSA = NSAA SA-C = ABSA

Certification Number _____ Cert Start Date _____ Cert End Date _____

Associate...\$150

Credential Held: CST CRNFA or RNFA PA-C OPA-C Other

Silver Exam Bundle...\$202 *(First-time certification only, currently an ASA member. See other side for requirements.)*

Student...\$75 *(Requirement: currently enrolled in a CAAHEP-accredited surgical assisting program.)*

Complete School Name _____ Start Date _____ Graduation Date _____

Instructor's Name _____ Instructor's Email _____

Gold Student Exam Bundle...\$267 *(First-time certification only, includes ASA membership. See other side for requirements.)*

DUES INFORMATION All dues are for one year. Dues are not refundable and membership is not transferable.

PAYMENT METHOD Remit to: ASA, 6 West Dry Creek Circle, Ste 200, Littleton, CO 80120-8031 or fax 303-694-9169

Check or money order enclosed (make checks payable to AST)

Bill my credit card: VISA MasterCard AmEx # _____ Expiration date _____

Signature _____

- Check here if you **do not** wish to receive email notification in addition to your regular postal notifications.
- ASA shares mailing information with a very limited number of organizations which provide membership with liability coverage and other services at a discounted rate as a benefit of membership. Check here if you **do not** wish to receive information.

Join ASA Today!

Print and mail your application with payment to
ASA • 6 West Dry Creek Circle • Suite 200 • Littleton, CO 80120
or fax to 303.694.9169
or submit this form directly to ASA by clicking "SUBMIT"

SUBMIT

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

ACTIVE MEMBER

- One who either (1) passed the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) Certified First Assistant (CFA) national certifying examination and maintains certification as defined by the NBSTSA; (2) passed the National Surgical Assistants (NSAA) Certified Surgical Assistant (CSA) national certifying and maintains certification as defined by the NSAA; (3) passed the American Board of Surgical Assistants (ABSA Surgical Assistant—Certified (SA-C) national certifying examination and maintains certification as defined by the ABSA; or (4) any other surgical assistant credential acceptable to the ASA.
- Active members have voice and vote.

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

- One who has passed the national certifying examination in the field of surgical technology offered by the NBSTSA to become a Certified Surgical Technologist (CST)
- One who has proof of either having completed or being currently enrolled as a student in a Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accredited surgical assisting program or its equivalent.
- One whose primary source of employment is teaching in a CAAHEP-accredited surgical assisting program or its equivalent.
- Associate members have voice but not vote.

STUDENT MEMBER

Please refer to Associate Member.

DISCOUNTED FIRST-TIME CFA EXAM BUNDLES

FIRST-TIME CERTIFICATION EXAM BUNDLES

\$237 GOLD STUDENT EXAM BUNDLE (For Students Only)

Requirements:

- First-time certification only
- Formally enrolled in a CAAHEP-accredited surgical assisting program*
- Includes student membership
 - \$160 Exam Application
 - \$35 CFA Exam Study Guide
 - \$65 Student Membership
 - \$7 S&H

\$267 Total per student

\$202 SILVER EXAM BUNDLE

Requirements:

- First-time certification only
- Graduated from a CAAHEP-accredited surgical assisting program*

or

- Hold the CST *AND* eligibility case load per the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting requirements

- Currently an ASA member
 - \$160 Exam Application
 - \$35 CFA Exam Study Guide
 - \$7 S&H

\$202 Total per existing member

* For program verification exam eligibility, contact the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) at 800-707-0057, option 1 or www.nbstsa.org.

COMPARE THE SAVINGS ON FIRST-TIME CFA EXAM BUNDLES

	NONMEMBER	GOLD STUDENT	SILVER
ASA Membership	N/A	\$65	Currently an ASA Member
Exam Study Guide	\$55	\$35	\$35
Exam Application	\$290	\$160	\$160
S&H	\$7	\$7	\$7
TOTAL	\$352	\$267	\$202



Association of Surgical Technologists

*6 West Dry Creek Circle, Suite 200
Littleton, CO 80120*

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WE NEED YOUR TALENTS

ASA needs your insights and expertise to help us grow. Several committees, such as Education, Bylaws, Membership and Legislative have vacancies. We are looking for CSFAs, CSAs and SA-Cs to advance our common causes.

Please visit the ASA website www.surgicalassistant.org and click on About ASA. Scroll down and download the CV and Consent to Serve forms. Send back your completed form by fax to 303-694-9169; email them to kludwig@ast.org or by mail to ASA, 6 West Dry Creek Circle, Suite 200, Littleton, CO 80120.