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The Collective Drive to Foster Innovation

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The International Society for the Advancement of Spine Surgery (ISASS) is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2025, marking a significant milestone in its history. I had the privilege of contributing to the foundation and growth of the society from the beginning when I was recruited by Dr Stephen Hochschuler and Dr Charles Ray to join visionaries like Karin Büttner-Janz, MD, PhD; Rudolf Bertagnoli, MD; Thierry Marnay, MD; and Matthew Gornet, MD. Together, we pioneered the early focus on motion-preserving technologies, including revolutionary artificial disc replacements like the Charité and ProDisc, during the society's early years when it was initially known as the Spine Arthroplasty Society.

The inception of ISASS was driven by a collective desire to foster innovation in spine surgery, particularly through the development of new technologies such as artificial disc replacements that could serve as alternatives to spinal fusion. The Charité disc, developed by Dr Büttner-Janz, became the first artificial disc approved for use, and Dr Marnay played a pivotal role in the creation of the ProDisc. These technologies laid the foundation for motion-preserving spine surgery, shaping the evolution of the field.

Early meetings of the Spine Arthroplasty Society brought together like-minded professionals focused on advancing spine surgery, with a particular emphasis on validating and refining new technologies. My role was centered around expanding the society's global reach and ensuring it became a key platform for international collaboration in spine surgery innovation.

In 2009, under the leadership of Dr Steve Garfin, the society rebranded as ISASS to reflect a broader mission encompassing all aspects of spine surgery beyond just arthroplasty. As president during this transition, I helped guide the society through its expansion while continuing to champion innovation and relevance in the fast-evolving field of spine surgery. ISASS became influential not only in clinical practice but also in shaping policy discussions, ensuring its impact extended beyond the operating room.

Today, lumbar total disc replacement (TDR) continues to thrive in clinical practice, with significant advancements made over the past 20 years. At the 2023 North American Spine Society meeting, a symposium moderated by Dr Scott Blumenthal, Dr Richard Guyer, and Dr Matthew Gornet showcased the latest developments in TDR, reinforcing the importance of surgeon expertise in minimizing complications and improving outcomes. Surgeon skill and experience were highlighted as critical factors in achieving successful TDR outcomes.

As spine arthroplasty continues to evolve, ISASS remains a vital platform for driving innovation. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotics are set to reshape the field, while fusion-TDR hybrid procedures and multilevel TDRs show great promise for treating complex spinal conditions. This special issue of the *International Journal of Spine Surgery* will serve as both a reflection on the progress of the past 25 years and a forward-looking discussion on the future of spine surgery, with ISASS and the *International Journal of Spine Surgery* continuing to lead the way in innovation.

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Editor's Note: Dr. Yuan served as the society's 2007-2008 president.

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