

# Letter from the Chair

Robert C. Schenck Jr, MD



I am pleased to present the fourth volume of the *University of New Mexico Orthopaedics Research Journal*. As the premier academic orthopaedic training program in the state, the University of New Mexico (UNM) Department of Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation provides services and information to benefit the people of New Mexico and orthopaedic practitioners who

care for them—something we have done with distinction for 45 years now. Our entire group of residents, fellows, nurse practitioners, physicians, physician assistants, and staff members functions as a supportive community and family with the same purpose. Furthermore, the popularity of the program extends beyond UNM and into national recognition. But this journal is quite special. Our research continues to prosper under the leadership of UNM faculty and financial support of the Sandia Orthopaedic Alumni Society (SOAS), allowing us to share state-of-the-art orthopaedic information with our many partners in New Mexico and the Southwest. I am proud to discuss several of our accomplishments during the past year.

As evidenced by this journal, research productivity at the UNM orthopaedics department continues to develop. The total number of publications increased from 12 in 2009 to 62 in 2014. We are very grateful for the leadership provided by Drs. Deana M. Mercer, Christina Salas, and Thomas A. DeCoster, with Dr. Mercer serving officially as the director of research. Our appreciation also goes to Dr. Gehron P. Treme, the program director, for his initiative in helping residents complete requirements of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education to become experienced in research activities. Lastly, my thanks to the many attending physicians, residents, and medical students who create such excellent presentations and publications. The addition of a research incentive program along with the invaluable dedication from Dr. Mercer has fueled scholarly pursuits in the department. This journal was the dream of many, and reaching the fourth edition makes me reflect on

the interest and desire of Mary A. Jacintha to create it.

Our faculty continuously grows. Last year, the department welcomed Drs. Christina Salas, Cory V. Carlston, Jessica C. McMichael, Dustin T. Briggs, Charlotte E. Orr, and Urvij M. Modhia. We are very excited to bring in Drs. David M. Bennett (pediatric orthopaedics) and Eric J. Lew (podiatric orthopaedics and member of upcoming “Toe and Flow” Program for diabetic foot care) later this summer. We are also thrilled with the inclusion of Sandoval Regional Medical Center (SRMC) for our orthopaedic inpatient care. I would like to thank UNM and SRMC faculty for helping our practice become even more robust, particularly Drs. Paul G. “The Colonel” Echols and Daniel C. Wascher whose efforts make SRMC a successful practice site. Dr. Echols has been the remarkable “glue” between two locations, with his influential support of our orthopaedic trauma room on main campus and phenomenal 4-year leadership at SRMC. Dr. Echols officially retires in June 2015, and we wish him well and are humbled by his many years of initiative and hard work at UNM orthopaedics department. We look forward to Dr. Wascher’s upcoming sabbatical in Lyon, France, and know he has been studying French religiously!

We hope all the best for our five senior residents as they end this phase of their careers and begin new ones. Dr. Heather K. Woodin will do an orthopaedic trauma fellowship in Scottsdale, Arizona. Dr. Scott D. Evans will leave for a hand and upper extremity fellowship at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. At the Campbell Clinic in Memphis, Tennessee, Dr. Sean B. Kuehn will perform his orthopaedic trauma fellowship. Dr. Dustin L. Richter will complete his sports medicine fellowship at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Finally, Dr. Gregory C. Strohmeyer is going to Sacramento, California, for his orthopaedic traumatology fellowship. We are so proud of this year’s resident class, and I am grateful for the support of their family and friends because these five Docs have worked extremely hard to become board-eligible orthopaedic surgeons. Heather, Scott, Sean, Dustin, and Greg, we are most proud of your accomplishments. I, along with the entire department, thank Dr. Treme for his outstanding leadership in the overarching education of UNM orthopaedic residents.

I am pleased to add that our division of physical therapy,

under the direction of Dr. Burke Gurney, has grown into an amazing education jewel for New Mexico. The division now has 10 full-time faculty members with expertise in orthopaedics, adult neurology, pediatrics, acute care, geriatrics, and cardiopulmonary physical therapy. These educators (and practitioners!) oversee three cohorts of 30 students who, after successfully completing the 3-year program, obtain a Doctor of Physical Therapy. The physical therapy division celebrated its 40th anniversary this past year and had a recent accreditation review that highlighted many fantastic achievements.

We did suffer loss and sadness at the UNM orthopaedics department with the passing of phenomenal surgeons: Drs. Dale V. Hoekstra, a beloved pediatric orthopaedic surgeon, team leader, and residents’ advocate; George E. Omer, the first chairman of the department and world-renowned hand surgeon; Elizabeth A. Szalay, a nationally respected pediatric orthopaedic surgeon, outstanding researcher, and tireless women’s advocate; Richard V. Worrell, a great resident mentor who for years directed our orthopaedic tumor service at UNM; and John M. Veitch (“Papa Veitch”), a hand surgeon, educator, and the father of current faculty member, Dr. Andrew J. Veitch. For details on the remarkable accomplishments of these five esteemed faculty members, please visit [http://orthopaedics.unm.edu/common/forms/orthopaedics\\_mourns.html](http://orthopaedics.unm.edu/common/forms/orthopaedics_mourns.html).

I want to thank our loyal alumni of SOAS for their enormous dedication and support, which includes hosting three annual events. The Eric Thomas Memorial Golf Tournament is held every September in honor of Dr. Eric A. Thomas (Class of 2004), in which we see alumni from all over the country enjoying Albuquerque’s great fall weather at the UNM Championship Golf Course. Additionally, the Joel Lubin Visiting Professorship lecture series occurs every spring to pay respects to Dr. Joel W. Lubin (Class of 2001), joined again this past April by Joel’s loving wife, Jennifer Lubin. And, thirdly, we always look forward to visiting with alumni at the SOAS-sponsored reception during the annual meeting of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

The assistance of alumni becomes more important to the UNM orthopaedics department every year. SOAS, created exclusively for graduates of our program, has a new lifetime membership available for a pledge of \$25,000 to the Sandia Circle (\$5000 every year for 5 years). I am a proud funder and lifetime member of SOAS and invite you to join me in becoming one, too. This is an exciting time to participate in the growth and success of our department. In addition to supporting the publication of this journal, you at SOAS support our outstanding resident surgeons.

It has been another great year at the University of New Mexico Department of Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation.

We express our sincerest gratitude to you—the alumni, faculty, and general community—for your continued support.

Thank you.

Robert C. Schenck Jr, MD  
Professor and Chair

