Message from The Chair

It is with great enthusiasm that I greet our Sports Neurology section as the new Section Chair. As I accept the honor and challenge of leading the section, I’m fully aware of our heritage to date.

I’ve watched and learned from our “starting Quarterback” Dr. Jeffrey Kutcher as he established our section. With great leadership, he demonstrated that individuals within our section, and our section as a whole are not only relevant, but contribute substantially to the AAN, and to Sports Medicine in general. Jeff strategically advocated for the section in ways that continue to benefit all of us and I thank him for his continued contributions.

Dr. Anthony Alessi “took the mound” and succeeded in his goal to continue the work started prior to his term. He strengthened the foundation of our section, helping to solidify our “team identity”. He further developed internal and external ties by fostering key relationships with partners such as the NFLPA and the American Brain Foundation in addition to the Academy itself. We thank him for his hard work, practical approach, and effective leadership.

As well, Dr. Brian Hainline (the current Vice-Chair) has contributed significantly to our section’s early formation and maturation by authoring the strategic plan (gameplan), through the Non-Concussive Sports Neurology course directorship, and by way of general Sports Neurology advocacy as part of his NCAA Medical Directorship duties. Dr. Barry Jordan, Dr. Chris Giza, Dr. Frank Conidi, and many others have contributed in ways that literally constitute the foundation of a sub-specialty and should all be recognized for their efforts. Finally, we should all acknowledge and thank Lynee Koester, our AAN section liaison. Lynee has been an invaluable “sixth man”, performing valiantly to guide and support the efforts of our section members and its leadership.

The Sports Neurology section has realized remarkable achievements in a short time. I invite you to take a few minutes to review of our strategic plan, with special attention to the Mission Statement, short, and long-term goals. Then consider the following examples of our Sport Section’s productivity. Achievements include (but are not limited to):
• Comprehensive Strategic Plan
• Position Statement on Sports Concussion
• Landmark Evidence-Based Guidelines on Sports Concussion
• Evolving and Expanding Annual Meeting Educational Programs (Concussion and Non-Concussion)
• Dedicated Sports-Concussion Conference

In addition, individual section members have contributed to the sub-specialty through:

• Developing a Sports Neurology Fellowship Training Program
• Hosting interested Neurology residents for visiting rotations
• Advocating in congressional hearings and contributing to public policy
• Participating in national and international consensus conferences and position statements
• Initiating original research and publishing articles and abstracts in peer reviewed forums
• Founding and developing Concussion Clinics and Sports Neurology Departments in private and academic environments
• Medical Directorships of local and national institutions

In keeping with the stage that has been set and in an effort to maintain and build on the momentum generated to date, my vision and goals are ambitious.

• Promote our members as a group of mature sub-specialists with wide-ranging expertise, unparalleled skillfulness, and specialized knowledge of the entire nervous system applied to sports.

• Improve communication and professional collaboration.

• Transition our education efforts from basic presentations to clinical and research related topics.

• Encourage and harness the energy of interested residents and young Neurologists, benefitting from their fresh approaches and innovative ideas applied to our sub-specialty.
• Work even more collaboratively with other AAN sections and with related external entities.

• Pursue innovative programming that meets the needs of our member’s, addresses the strategic plan, and meets the challenges of the subspecialty in creative ways.

If any of the goals listed above are of interest to you, please let me know. If there are other issues or projects that you are passionate about, or feel deserve greater attention, I’d like to hear about them as well.

Over the next few weeks, I’ll be reaching out to our membership for collaboration on specific projects and announcing those projects to our general membership. In the meanwhile, I wish everyone a healthy, happy, and prosperous spring and summer season. I look forward to a productive Sports Concussion Conference in Chicago next month. It will be a great way to “kick off” our next season.

_Sports Neurology on 3!_

Vernon B. Williams, MD