



Patient Perspective

Injury gave future doctor appreciation for research

At a time when most 16-year-olds were enjoying a relaxing summer break, OREF Shands Circle member **John S. Kirkpatrick, MD, MS** was learning firsthand about the importance of orthopaedic research.

When he was 14, John Kirkpatrick was playing football when he suffered a growth plate injury that left him with a leg length discrepancy. Two years later, his doctor, **Harlan C. Amstutz, MD** offered him an option to be involved in a clinical trial involving one-stage femoral lengthening. This was a major undertaking for both surgeon and patient.

“That basically took my entire summer, and then I had protected weight bearing through December — and that was all at age 16,” Dr. Kirkpatrick recalled.

▲ Dr. Kirkpatrick (center) with chief residents (l-r) Jeffrey Keen, MD; Joel Tucker, MD; (Dr. Kirkpatrick); Steven Potter, MD; and Stephen Arndt, MD

▲▲ Dr. Kirkpatrick with his wife, Jill, at a past AAOS Annual Meeting in New Orleans

SCIENCE AND MECHANICS

Despite the pain and challenges he endured, Dr. Kirkpatrick wanted to learn more about orthopaedics. What a fascinating way, he thought, to combine his growing interest in science and mechanics, while being able to help others.

Dr. Kirkpatrick sustained his interest in orthopaedics through college and medical school. He was attracted to a subspecialty in spine during his residency because of the complexities in dealing with both neurological and structural tissue. Currently, he chairs the University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and Rehabilitation, and is the director of the orthopaedic surgery residency.

Early in his practice, Dr. Kirkpatrick aspired to include biomechanics research in his work, but found that closely interacting with patients and residents was more rewarding for him. Still, he never forgot how important research was to the development of orthopaedics, and to his own recovery.

Dr. Kirkpatrick first chose to contribute to OREF while still a fellow. Even as a young doctor, he saw himself as a steward

for his earnings. Not everyone could understand his thinking.

“It depends on how you view money,” he explained. “If you think money is all yours and you want to keep it, that’s fine. But, the way I view it, it’s a resource to help others and further our field. Like the line from ‘Hello Dolly,’ ‘Money, pardon the expression, is like manure. It’s not worth a thing unless it’s spread around, encouraging young things to grow.’”

INSPIRED BY LEADERS

OREF supports orthopaedic research as directly as possible, Dr. Kirkpatrick said, which is one of its greatest strengths. He’s also been pleased with OREF leadership — those who serve on the board, those who review grants, and those who manage the foundation. **James R. Urbaniak, MD**, past OREF board chair, set an example of giving back to orthopaedics while Dr. Kirkpatrick was a resident. It all led Dr. Kirkpatrick and his wife, **Jill**, to become **Alfred R. Shands Jr., MD Circle** members. Commitments made at the Shands Circle level permanently fund research and education. Donors make a minimum \$20,000 cash contribution, which can be spread over five years, or a deferred giving arrangement of \$50,000 or more.

To facilitate his and his wife’s Shands Circle contribution, Dr. Kirkpatrick chose to establish a charitable remainder trust (CRT). This giving option not only fuels research and education in perpetuity, but also offers donor benefits such as an immediate income tax deduction, income for a specific number of years, and

avoidance of capital gains taxes. A CRT, Dr. Kirkpatrick said, was the best way to use a portion of the family’s assets for the greatest good possible.

“It makes sense to give to the causes that are important in your life,” he said. “We give a portion to our children, to our church, to the schools that benefited our children, and to OREF.”

While Shands Circle commitments ensure the stability of OREF’s future funding, the Annual Campaign supports current research. In addition to their Shands Circle commitment, for the past 18 years, Dr. and Mrs. Kirkpatrick have been Order of Merit donors — giving \$1,000 or more each year to OREF’s Annual Campaign.

LEADING THE NEXT GENERATION

Dr. Kirkpatrick regularly shares his belief in OREF’s mission with residents by making contributions on their behalf, giving them the recognition of being Annual Campaign donors. His efforts enhance the visibility of OREF for residents, and help them understand how supporting OREF helps orthopaedic surgeons and their patients, he said.

Dr. Kirkpatrick not only shares his resources with OREF, he has also donated his time by serving as a State Campaign Volunteer when he lived in Alabama, writing letters and making phone calls to his colleagues.

It wasn’t easy. “You’ve got to be able to take rejection,” he joked. Still, he said that inviting others to join him in supporting OREF was another way to contribute.



Research, Dr. Kirkpatrick explained, is so incremental that it may be hard for orthopaedists to appreciate the need to support it year after year based on their day-to-day work. The key, he said, is to look back over time, and then the impact of OREF funding becomes clear.

THE CLINICAL IMPACT OF OREF

As an example, Dr. Kirkpatrick cites an OREF Career Development Award granted early in the career of **James N. Weinstein, DO, MS**, who is now the president of the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Clinic. With OREF support early in his career, Dr. Weinstein developed skills leading to pioneering research on spine outcomes that eventually enhanced the understanding of the treatment for a variety of lumbar disorders.

Dr. Kirkpatrick said that his life and his career have been blessed, thanks in large part to the field of orthopaedic surgery. He remembers — and will continue to remind others — that much clinical knowledge and many abilities can be linked to the work of OREF.

“Our profession has come a long way, and much of what we’re able to do for our patients is based on the education or research efforts that have, in some fundamental way, been supported through OREF.” ■