

AMERICAN MEDICAL FOUNDATION

For Peer Review & Education

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TELEMENTORING—THE NEW SURGICAL TOOL

PHILADELPHIA, PA — for the first time in the United States, several surgical specialty societies will join together in a program to determine whether telementoring can provide an effective means for doctors to learn new skills and improve old ones. Telementoring is the process in which an experienced surgeon can conduct, guide and mentor a second surgeon from a remote location.

If successful, this initiative could establish the model for efficient transfer of knowledge and skills from experienced practitioners to recent graduates or learning surgeons who seek training on new or complex techniques and procedures.

The program will be funded by a grant provided by the Foundation for Advanced Medical Education (FAME), a division of the American Medical Foundation for Peer Review and Education, based in Philadelphia. The grant is being provided to the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES) who will oversee the design and implementation of the project. This project will allow surgeons to utilize telementoring solutions that enable accomplished surgeons to watch and participate in surgery from a remote site, to teach less-experienced surgeons new techniques by instructing them in real-time as advisors or "hands on" partners to improve their skills. The American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS) will collaborate in the project.

The grant will cover the first phase of the project in which mentoring and proctoring of bariatric surgical procedures will be undertaken. The study will target a complex bariatric operation, laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy. Leading bariatric and gastrointestinal surgeons from throughout the United States have agreed to participate. If proven effective for teaching and mentoring bariatric procedures, this project will expand to all areas of complex surgical procedures.

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The project will be lead by Dr. Nuhn T. Nguyen, Chief, Division of Gastrointestinal Surgery, at the University of California, Irvine CA. A team of five nationally prominent bariatric surgeons will provide mentorship.

The grant is being generously supported by KARL STORZ Endoscopy-America, Inc., a leader in OR integration technologies, and InTouch Health®, the world leader in Remote Presence healthcare solutions. The companies are lending remote presence devices to the preceptors who will help doctors operate with more confidence. KARL STORZ has combined its OR1® System with InTouch Health's Remote Presence Technology to provide powerful new solutions for telemedicine and telementoring. Called VisitOR1™, the system gives remote surgeons seamless connectivity to operating rooms, emergency rooms, and critical care units. Using high-speed Internet connections, surgeons can remotely control the VisitOR1™ system positioned above the surgical field, providing surgeons with fully immersive and collaborative experiences.

About SAGES

The Society of American and Gastrointestinal Surgeons (SAGES) represents a worldwide community of surgeons that brings minimal access surgery, endoscopy and emerging techniques to patients in every country. SAGES represents over 6,000 surgeons and is the second largest professional medical organization representing general and gastrointestinal surgeons in the U.S. The mission of the Society is to provide leadership in surgery, particularly gastrointestinal and endoscopic surgery, to optimize patient care through education, research and innovation.

Minimal access/non-invasive technology and techniques are defined as diagnostic or therapeutic flexible endoscopy, laparoscopic surgery, endoscopic image-guided and energy-assisted modalities and thoracoscopy as they relate to gastrointestinal or abdominal disease. www.SAGES.org

About ASMBS

The American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS) is the largest society for this specialty in the world. The vision of the Society is to improve public health and well being by lessening the burden of the disease.

The society's leadership and have established an excellent organization with educational and support programs for surgeons and integrated health professionals. The purpose of the society is to advance the art and science of metabolic and bariatric surgery. www.asmbs.org.

About KARL STORZ

KARL STORZ Endoscopy-America, Inc., is an affiliate of KARL STORZ GmbH & Co. KG, an international leader for 65 years in reusable endoscope technology, encompassing all endoscopic specialties. Based in Tuttlingen, Germany, KARL STORZ GmbH & Co. KG is a family-owned company that designs, engineers, manufactures, and markets all its products with an emphasis on visionary design, precision craftsmanship and clinical effectiveness. For more information, call (800) 421-0837 or visit the company's Web site at www.karlstorz.com.

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About IN TOUCH HEALTH

InTouch Health provides comprehensive telemedicine solutions that enable physicians to perform real-time consults with hospital patients. Through a single interface, physicians can access a host of FDA-cleared Remote Presence devices to provide and document care into emergency rooms, critical care units, patient wards and operating rooms.

Wherever access to medical expertise is limited, InTouch Health's Remote Presence telemedicine solutions can effectively extend the physician's reach to manage patient care, thereby removing critical time and distance barriers.

The Company has more than 300 hospitals locations on six continents using Remote Presence to deliver specialty care services such as stroke, critical care coverage, cardiology, trauma, pediatrics, neonatology, psychiatry, patient rounds, translation services, clinical education and surgical/procedure mentoring. For more information, please visit www.intouchhealth.com

About THE AMERICAN MEDICAL FOUNDATION

The American Medical Foundation for Peer Review & Education (AMF) is the only non-profit organization in the United States for independent hospital and medical staff peer review and on-site physician continuing education. Since 1987 they have been conducting assessment of institutional quality of care and physician competency for 2800 hospitals, their healthcare corporations and state agencies carrying out quality-of-care regulations, all to improve patient safety. Their Residency Program Consultation Council (RPCC) assists in correcting residency program deficiencies which lead to adverse actions promulgated by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGM).

FAME Accomplishments to Date

In 2001, the Foundation for Advanced Medical Education (FAME), the educational division of AMF, received a \$2,000,000 grant to create a template for future training and for retraining of practicing community surgeons, in both current skills and in the utilization of new procedures and technology. FAME administered this grant, implemented by six specialty societies, including: the American College of Surgeons (ACS), the Society of Thoracic Surgeons/the American Association of Thoracic Surgeons (STS/AATS), the American College of Cardiology (ACC), the Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS), and the Society for Cardiac Angiography and Interventions (SCA&I).

The results of this FAME three-step pilot showed the model (didactic, simulation and precepting) to be highly effective in teaching new procedures to practicing clinicians. The essence of the preceptee /preceptor model is interactive and is fundamental to the learning experience. However, such impediments as travel, conflicting schedules and patient or physician postponement can often lead to cancellations of the necessary sufficient planned interactions. Thus, in a grant to SAGES collaborating with ASMBS, telementoring is now being tested to determine if it will be useful in the transition from the training environment to the primary practice environment as a practical enhancement and/or efficient alternative.

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For additional information:

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