Right now is truly a great time to be a hernia surgeon. Our specialty continues to evolve and advance. The Americas Hernia Society (AHS) remains committed to bringing value to our members and encourage collaboration. In publishing an AHS Newsletter, our goal is to provide value to our members. In the newsletter, we will be updating members on AHS efforts and highlighting new initiatives. We hope the newsletter will be the catalyst for members of the AHS to get involved in various committees and activities.

Our society remains committed to the care of hernia patients around the world. We consider to be the epicenter of hernia education, research, and collaboration, leading to, improved care, knowledge, and camaraderie amongst surgeons and stakeholders involved in hernia care.

**AHSQC**

Perhaps the most notable accomplishment of the AHS, over the past years, has been the creation and implementation of a hernia specific registry, the Americas Hernia Society Quality Collaborative (AHSQC). Under the leadership of Ben Poulose, MD and Mike Rosen, MD the AHSQC has become the preeminent hernia registry. The registry has revolutionized surgeons data to improve outcomes and truly have a quality collaborative. Many of our members have taken advantage of the AHSQC as an invaluable resource for surgeons specializing in hernia surgery. We encourage all of our members to join. The AHSQC is an amazing initiative that has unforeseen benefits until the surgeon joins and understands the data to improve their outcomes.

**Hernia Prevention Task Force**

One of my main initiatives, as your president this year, is to increase awareness and focus on the important topic of hernia prevention. I have formed the Hernia Prevention Task Force with plans to educate and ultimately reduce the occurrence of hernias.

Specifically, the task force will focus on the many topics that effect hernia prevention, including laparotomy closure, the use of prophylactic mesh, education, and policy (including billing/coding issues).

The Hernia Prevention Task Force was able to help publicize a CPT Code for prophylactic mesh augmentation. John Fischer, MD, one of our members, and his team at Penn, were able to get a prophylactic mesh code accepted, as a tracking/research code, by the AMA. Our hopes for the future are that the code will move from a category III code to a category I code. The AHS will keep our members informed on the status. See the article below for more information.

The task force is planning a hernia prevention meeting chaired by Hobart Harris, MD, in the Fall of 2017. The meeting will facilitate education and collaboration to better solve issues in hernia prevention. Hernia prevention is a very complex problem and requires collaboration by not only the task force, but by all members of the AHS. I encourage you to share your expertise and research with our group and by volunteering your time to become involved in the subcommittees of the Hernia Prevention Task Force. Please contact William W. Hope, MD if you are interested in becoming involved in the Hernia Prevention Task Force.

**Education**

Education is an integral part of our society. The AHS Annual Meeting remains the most effective avenue to present research, surgical techniques, and collaborate with surgeons from all over the world. The AHS leadership understands, in order to be the epicenter in hernia education, we need to provide many different educational opportunities for our members. There are many educational meetings hosted by other societies that provide hernia education. The AHS leadership is in the process of formalizing a plan to ensure collaboration and promote hernia education that is easily accessible and relevant for our surgeons.

**Member Engagement**

As our society and specialty continues to grow, member involvement is crucial. We encourage members to engage our leadership regarding issues and ideas on improving the AHS. We strive to make the AHS a positive resource for surgeons. Our goal, in addition to the newsletter, is to keep our membership informed on the many endeavors our society is accomplishing. Please let Dr. Hope or any of the leadership know if you have suggestions relevant to the growth and development of our society. We look forward to hearing from you.
AHS RESIDENT COMMITTEE
Engaging Surgical Residents During Training - David Krpata, MD

As we continue to try and expand as a society, the AHS has made a significant effort toward educating and engaging surgical residents during their training. The AHS Resident Committee has held an AHS sponsored lunch and learn session at the American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress last year and we plan on repeating this at the upcoming ACS Clinical Congress in Washington DC.

In addition, the AHS dedicated a full session at the recent AHS 17th Annual Hernia Repair toward resident, fellow and young faculty development. As part of this, the Resident Committee gave out six Stoppa Travel Scholarships to residents from around the country to assist them with their travel to the AHS meeting.

In May, we held our first AHS resident Webinar, which included topics on inguinal and ventral hernias and concluded with a “Safe Answers for the Boards Lecture.” Be on the lookout for the next webinar this fall.

In collaboration with the AHSQC, the AHS resident committee awarded two $2,500 resident research grants that will allow these residents to utilize the AHSQC data to answer research questions. We would like to congratulate Ivy Haskins, MD and Thomas Gavigan, MD who are this years grant recipients. The results of their grants titled Development and Validation of a Ventral Hernia Decision Support Tool Using the AHSQC and Prospective Cohort Study of Patients Undergoing Parastomal Hernia Repair using the Americas Hernia Society Quality Collaborative, respectively, will be presented at the 18th Annual Hernia Repair in Cancun!

Interested in becoming involved with the AHS Resident Committee?
Contact David Krpata, MD
dkrpata@ccf.org

AHS NEW WEBSITE
www.americanherniasociety.org

The Americas Hernia Society is proud to announce a new, redesigned website. Our goal is to be the go to hernia website for patients and surgeons looking for relevant, up to date information, surgical techniques, education, guidelines, and answers to questions about hernias. We’ve enhanced old features and added some new features, including:

- @AmericanHernia Twitter feed. The feed includes frequent links to news, interesting articles, and upcoming events of interest to our members.
- Patient Education - including, FAQ and hernia information to ease the patients mind when diagnosed with a hernia.
- A video library including peer-reviewed videos submitted by members of the AHS. The purpose is to provide surgeons with a selection of hernia techniques found in hernia repair for reference and education. Topics include open, laparoscopic, and robotic repair of, ventral, inguinal and hiatal hernias.
- Language Selection - view the website in the language of your choice.
- Dynamic delivery through computer, mobile and tablet for easy navigation through different platforms.

With the development of the new site, we hope our members will continue to provide insight, content, and engagement with surgeons who may not be members, current members, and the future surgeons in hernia repair. The AHS long term goal is to be the first stop for surgeons and patients looking for information and education in hernia surgery.
HERNIA PREVENTION CODE 0437T - AN UPDATE

By John P. Fischer, MD, MPH

The new prophylactic mesh placement (PMP) code, 0437T, is a Category III CPT code which is a temporary code permitting data collection for PMP and will serve to characterize utilization of this technique in practice. It is an add-on code, which means that when it transitions to a Category I code it will add additional relative value units (RVUs) to an associated or index procedure, similar to the 49568 code for mesh placement during herniorrhaphy. Payment for Category III services is based on individual payor policies rather than a prescribed fee schedule. However, a lack of published RVU does not prohibit payment, but certainly represents a challenge for reimbursement for these codes. Based upon the undefined reimbursement and the critical need for utilization of this code, there is a challenge in having Category III codes used in practice. As outlined by the AMA, criteria exist for moving a Category III code to a Category I code:

- All devices and drugs necessary for performance of the procedure or service have received FDA clearance.
- The procedure or service is performed by many physicians across the United States.
- The procedure or service is performed with frequency consistent with the intended clinical use.
- The procedure or service is consistent with current medical practice.
- The clinical efficacy of the procedure or service is documented in literature.

In brief, to become a Category I code, the procedure must be safe, performed by physicians in the United States, and be supported by peer-reviewed publications. Specifically, the criteria of evidence for progression to a Category I code requires five peer-reviewed publications, of which three must be based on United States patient populations while also substantiating level IIIa/IIIb for at least one of the articles (systematic review of case control or case control study).


AHSQC Resident Research Award

Congratulations to the two 2016 AHSQC Resident Research Award grant recipients. AHS received eleven Resident Research Grant applications this year. The grant submissions were all very interesting and deserving of the award. Thank you to all the Residents who submitted research grant requests this year.

2016 Resident Research Awards were presented to:

Ivy N. Haskins, MD
Clinical Research Fellow
Cleveland Clinic Comprehensive Hernia Center
Development and Validation of a Ventral Hernia Decision Support Tool Using AHSQC

Thomas Gavigan, MD, MSc
Carolinas Medical Center
Charlotte, NC
Prospective Cohort Study of Patients Undergoing Parastomal Hernia Repair Using the AHSQC

Each institution will receive a $2500 research grant. The results of the study will be presented at the 2017 AHS meeting in Cancun, Mexico.