

**J. Charles Rich, MD**  
**AANS President**  
**1996-1997**



April 1996 to April 1997 was an eventful year for the AANS. Now, from a ten-year perspective, it will be interesting for the reader to assess what has transpired since then in the context of progress or a lack thereof. A brief paragraph will be devoted to some of these issues.

The Agency for Health Care Policy and Research had been mandated by Congress to eliminate inappropriate treatment variations. So-called Critical Pathway treatment outlines were, accordingly, being purveyed by HMOs as the (purported) standards of care. As a better option, the AANS was already addressing the provision of evidence-based, current medical literature supported, acceptable practice standards for our membership.

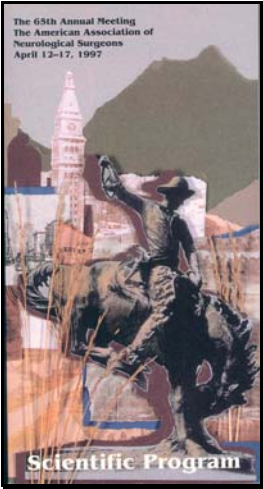
In 1994 Congress had also asked the Health Care Finance Administration (HCFA) to develop a system to determine fair practice expense for all physicians. More than 40% of physician payment was to be based on that expense component. Long story short: as of January 1, 1998 the fees for chiropractic, dermatology, optometry, general practice and podiatry were to go up 35-50% while the fees for cardiac and thoracic surgery, neurological surgery, cardiology and vascular surgery were to go down by 35-50%. The AANS and CNS cooperated with the latter group of specialists in coming up with the financial wherewithal to lobby against this. We found out who our friends were and the AMA was conspicuously unhelpful.

Capitated health insurance was being pushed by HMOs and some neurosurgeons participated. The obvious practice disincentives and consequent ethical conflicts all devolved on the neurosurgical practitioner -- not the insurer. The experience of the mid-1990s accounts for its diminished popularity as an insurance product today.

As always, the AANS Annual Meeting and the *Journal of Neurosurgery* were of paramount importance.

Neurosurgery://On-Call was in its infancy and its initial formulation and implementation exemplified the need for effective AANS-CNS cooperation and collaboration. What was clearly evident to some of us ten years ago, I hope is still obvious today. In the present extensively competitive political and business environment in which we function, we cannot afford the luxury of dissension and divisions of purpose. The AANS is our spokesorganization. It has earned and deserves the enthusiastic support of all neurological surgeons.

August 2006

<b>Vital Statistics</b>	
	<p>1996-1997</p> <p>Officers: J. Charles Rich Jr., President  Edward R. Laws, Jr., President Elect  Russell L. Travis, Vice President  Martin H. Weiss, Secretary  Stewart B. Dunsker, Treasurer</p> <p>Annual Meeting Location: Denver, CO</p> <p>Presidential Address: In times of change learners inherit the earth. JNeurosurg 87:659-666, 1997.</p> <p>Cushing Orator: William J. Bennett, PhD, former US Secretary of Education, author, politician, professor. In Defense of Western Civilization. [Not Published]</p> <p>Awards: Cushing Medal - Robert G. Ojemann  Distinguished Service - Ernest W. Mack  Humanitarian - Robert J. White</p> <p>Honorary Member: Carl H. Hauber</p> <p>Lecture: Schneider – L. N. Hopkins</p> <p>Membership: 5086</p>