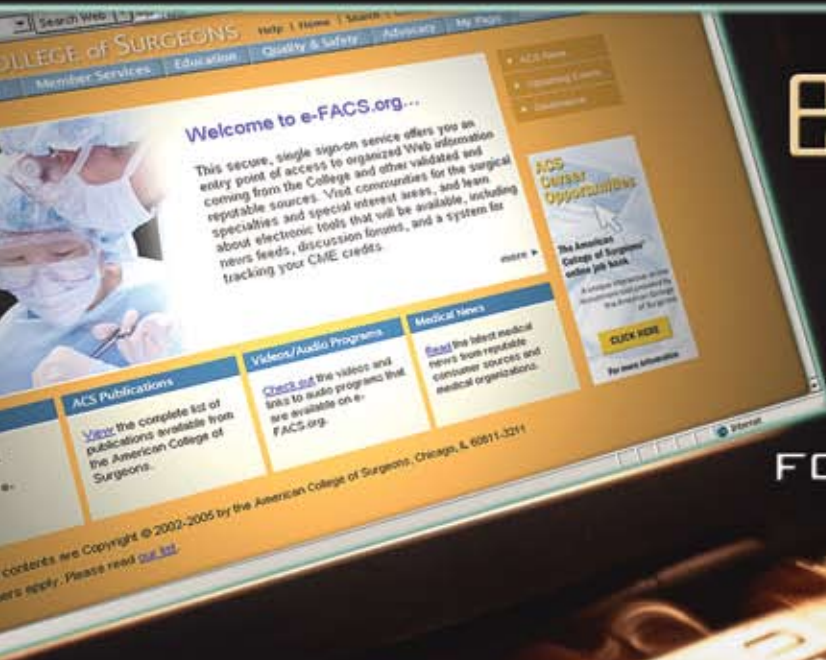


INTRODUCING



e-facs.org

COLLEGE
LAUNCHES
WEB PORTAL
FOR ITS MEMBERS

by George F. Sheldon, MD, FACS, Chapel Hill, NC

During the past decade, the American College of Surgeons has increased and expanded its communications with its members by embracing and employing electronic communications vehicles—the weekly electronic newsletter, *ACS NewsScope*, and regular “special alerts” sent via e-mail. In addition, the College’s Web site—www.facs.org—generates nearly 1 million hits per month. As our society becomes more computer literate and technologic advances provide new collaborative tools, the College is finding even greater opportunities to interact with its members. In summer 2004, at the suggestion of the Resident and Associate Society and the Committee on Young Surgeons, the Board of Regents approved in concept and with financial support the creation of a Web portal for this purpose.

The mission of the American College of Surgeons Web portal—e-FACS.org—is to expand the College’s role as an information resource on patient care for the various surgical specialties and on advances in bioscience, research, and health policy by providing its members with a personalized gateway to the Internet that will (1) filter and facilitate their access to Web-based information; (2) initiate and facilitate collaboration and exchange of ideas among members; and (3) provide a secure, single sign-on service that will be the entry point of access to organized Web information coming from the College and other validated and reputable sources.

A project of the College’s Informatics and Communications Committees, the portal has been in development for approximately 18 months. A Web Portal Steering Committee provides overall guidance with respect to the portal’s vision, while a Web Portal Editorial Board advises and assists the editor-in-chief in selecting material appropriate for the portal’s users, which include Fellows, Associate Fellows, surgical residents, and medical students.

What is a portal?

For those unfamiliar with the term, a Web portal is a secure, single-point-of-entry Web site configured for a specific community or organization. Many people use portals without even knowing they are doing so—well-known

examples include Amazon.com, “My Yahoo,” and “My MSN.” Portals are built on the same technology used for Web sites, but they enhance the functionality and flexibility to cater to the demands of its users. There are five major differences between a Web site and a Web portal—authentication, personalization, customization, integration, and content management.

- *Authentication*—In addition to requiring a login to enter a portal, the portal also knows who you are through an authentication process. Authentication via single-sign-on also eliminates the need to remember many usernames and passwords when entering other sites through the portal.

- *Personalization*—A portal’s highly focused content eliminates the need to visit many different Web sites for information.

- *Customization*—Users select and organize their own content in a portal based on individual preferences.

Getting started

Note: To access the Web portal, you will need your eight-digit Fellowship ID number (which can be found on your Fellowship card or on the mailing label on your monthly package containing the *Bulletin* and the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*).

After opening the Web browser of your choice (for example, Internet Explorer, Firefox, or AOL), enter www.efacs.org in the “open file” area of your browser. The first page you will see is the login page.

Before logging in to the portal, click on the “Quick Start Guide” under the login area of the page. This guide will provide you with instructions on how to log in, as well as a succinct review of what you will find in various areas of the College’s Web portal.

When you are ready to get started, enter your eight-digit Fellowship ID number as your username. Your password is your last name. Example:

Username: 12345678

Password: smith

• *Integration*—In a portal, relevant tools and information come from many sources and are displayed just for the user.

• *Content management*—Whereas content for a Web site is usually published by submitting it to a Web master or a Web team for posting, a portal provides content-authoring systems that allow nontechnical staff to create content. This content is routed to the managing editor for approval; after electronic approval, the content is immediately published on the portal (no coding required). As a result, the information a user needs and wants gets to him or her faster.

Web portal Editorial Board

The Web portal Editorial Board is made up of at-large members, community editors, and associate community editors (see box); Lazar J. Greenfield, MD, FACS, Associate Editor; Jerry Schwartz, Managing Editor; Linn Meyer, Director of Communications, and Howard Tanzman, Director of Information Technology (IT); and the author of the present article (Editor-in-Chief).

• *At-large members*—At-large members of the ACS Web portal Editorial Board focus on “big picture” issues. Responsibilities include recommending topics of interest to portal users; generating content, the sole criterion being relevance

ACS Web portal Editorial Board

Editor-in-Chief: George F. Sheldon, MD, FACS
Associate Editor: Lazar J. Greenfield, MD, FACS
Managing Editor: Jerry Schwartz

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Co-Community Editor, Pediatric Surgery
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Danielle A. Katz, MD
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Blair A. Keagy, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Vascular Surgery
M. Margaret Kemeny, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Surgical Oncology

and usefulness; serving as peer reviewers when called upon to do so; and maintaining communication with regard to quality of portal content.

- *Community and associate community editors*—Although these editors and at-large members of the board are equally important in terms of hierarchy, community editors have a more detailed focus. These editors identify content for community areas, assuming responsibility for overall quality of intellectual content, and maintain activity on discussion boards. Each community editor selects a small group of experts—associate community editors—to assist in identifying and creating content for his or her community.

Currently, there are 17 at-large members, 44 community editors, and 138 associate community editors. At least one community editor has been assigned the task of acting as a liaison to the respective Advisory Council for each of the surgical specialties.

The communities

There are two types of communities in the portal: specialty communities and special interest communities.

- *Specialty communities* mirror the ACS Advisory Councils for the Surgical Specialties, with 10 subspecialties listed under general sur-

Douglas A. Levine, MD
Co-Community Editor, Gynecology & Obstetrics

Stephen J. Mathes, MD, FACS
Co-Community Editor, Plastic Surgery

Mary H. McGrath, MD, FACS
Co-Community Editor, Plastic Surgery

Robin S. McLeod, MD, FACS
At-Large Member

J. Wayne Meredith, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Trauma Surgery

Louis M. Messina, MD, FACS
At-Large Member

Anthony A. Meyer, MD, PhD, FACS
Community Editor, Career Mentoring

Linn Meyer
Director of Communications

Lena M. Napolitano, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Surgical Critical Care

Sherwin B. Nuland, MD, FACS
Community Editor, History & Philosophy

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Community Editor, Residents

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At-Large Member

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Community Editor, Bariatric Surgery

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Community Editor, Cardiothoracic Surgery

Charles F. Rinker II, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Rural Surgeons

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Co-Community Editor, Otolaryngology–Head & Neck Surgery

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Community Editor, Geriatric Surgery

Grace S. Rozycki, MD, FACS
At-Large Member

Ajit K. Sachdeva, MD, FACS
At-Large Member

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Co-Community Editor, Pediatric Surgery

M. Michael Shabot, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Informatics

Robert L. Sheridan, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Burn Medicine & Surgery

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Community Editor, Breast Cancer Surgery

Nathaniel J. Soper, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Minimally Invasive Surgery

Wiley W. Souba, MD, ScD, FACS
At-Large Member

Howard Tanzman
Director of Information Technology

James C. Thompson, MD, FACS
Senior Consultant, Geriatric Surgery

Gary L. Timmerman, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Young Surgeons

Courtney M. Townsend, Jr., MD, FACS
At-Large Member

Donald D. Trunkey, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Terrorism

Richard D. Williams, MD, FACS
Community Editor, Urologic Surgery

gery: bariatric surgery, breast cancer surgery, burn medicine and surgery, endocrine surgery, gastrointestinal surgery, minimally invasive surgery, surgical critical care, surgical oncology, transplantation surgery, and trauma surgery.

- *Special interest communities* are composed of (1) clinical areas that are not subspecialties under general surgery, and (2) nonclinical areas of special interest. Currently, there are communities designated for biomedical engineering, Canadian Fellows, career mentoring, geriatric surgery, history and philosophy, informatics, international surgery, residents, rural surgeons, senior surgeons, surgical journal editors, terrorism, translational oncology, uniformed services, and young surgeons.

Portal communities offer core content, editorials, reports, algorithms, discussion forums, automated news feeds, links to related Web sites/portals, important meeting dates, videos, recommended reading, accreditation/certification information, and more. Portal users are able to join as many communities as they wish.

In addition to these robust content areas, *e-FACS.org* offers members useful tools that include the ability to calculate and log continuing medical education credits, track resident hours, and enter information into case logs.

How it all came about

Early last year, key players from the Communications and IT staff and I participated in a design workshop with outside portal consultants to ensure that the organizational and user goals for *e-FACS.org* would be reflected on the home page and secondary page designs. Workshop participants defined user profiles that were then used as the basis for decision making with regard to content organization, nomenclature, and navigation. After grouping information into categories based on fundamental organization principles, content groups were ranked by order of importance to portal users.

The final designs for the portal's home page and secondary pages were then developed by the vendor and approved by College staff last April. The design features easy-to-use navigation with links to College highlights, advocacy, member services, education, quality and safety, and specialties and communities, as well as a

place for rotating advertisements from approved commercial sponsors. From the home page, users can also perform basic and detailed content searches, search for a colleague, look for upcoming events, and provide feedback regarding the features and navigation of the portal, as well as customize their own home page to include items that interest them in addition to content that will be provided for them by the College.

We are very pleased to now be able to announce the formal launch of *e-FACS.org*. Obviously, it will take several years to bring the portal to fruition (not to mention the fact that the portal will always be evolving to meet the increasing needs of its users), but the development phase and beta testing stages have provided us with excellent feedback that has helped us make the College's Web portal as useful and user friendly as possible for our members at this point in time.

This is a very exciting project for the American College of Surgeons, and we greatly appreciate the Resident and Associate Society and the Committee on Young Surgeons for recommending it on behalf of the entire membership. We hope that you will visit *e-FACS.org* now and on a regular basis—if not daily—in the future. We believe the Web portal will make it easier for members to keep current on the wealth of information that is available on advances in surgery and related issues, and we are convinced that regular use of *e-FACS.org* and the information and features it offers will make all of our professional lives a little easier. □

Dr. Sheldon is Editor-in-Chief of *e-FACS.org*, the College's Web portal.

He is professor of surgery and social medicine and former chair of surgery, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. He is a former Resident and Past-President of the College.

