

14 Spine Surgeons Receive Leadership Awards Featured

Written by [Laura Miller](#) | June 05, 2013

Becker's Spine Review has named the recipients of the Annual Spine Leadership Award 2013. Recipients were selected based on their noteworthy contributions to their practice and the spine community, entrepreneurial skills and influence in business and leadership.

Editor's note: Becker's Healthcare received numerous nominations for the inaugural Leadership Awards. We appreciate the time and thought that went into each nomination, all of which were considered by a panel of editorial team members and healthcare industry experts. The 2013 awardee decisions are final. Becker's Healthcare looks forward to highlighting exemplary careers in healthcare with annual Leadership Awards in years to come.

The surgeons are listed in alphabetical order.

Robert S. Bray Jr., MD, CEO & Founding Director of DISC Sports & Spine Center in Marina del Rey, Calif.

Dr. Bray founded DISC Sports & Spine Center in 2006, which now includes multiple practice locations and two ambulatory surgery centers. He previously founded the Institute for Spinal Disorders at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and served as director of neurosurgery and headed the spine program at St. John's Medical Center, Century City Hospital and Daniel Freeman Memorial Hospital.

Throughout his career, Dr. Bray has spent more than 20 years on active and reserve duty with the United States Air Force and received multiple medals for his contributions to protocol development and teaching wartime trauma techniques. His practice is currently devoted to minimally invasive outpatient spine surgery and he holds several patents for innovative spinal implants and surgical instruments.

In recent years, DISC has partnered with several elite athletic organizations to provide care for Red Bull America athletes, Olympic athletes and the Los

Angeles Kings, along with other professional athletes. In addition to his clinical practice, Dr. Bray has trained more than 25 Fellows and lectures internationally on spine-related topics.

Dr. Bray earned his medical degree at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and completed additional training at Baylor affiliated hospitals. He is a member of several professional organizations, including the North American Spine Society and American Association of Neurological Surgeons.

John Caruso, MD, FACS, President of Parkway Neuroscience & Spine Institute/Parkway Surgery Center, Hagerstown, Md.

Dr. Caruso is a dedicated advocate for physician rights and co-founded "Save Our Doctors, Protect Our Patients" campaign. He initiated and helped create legislation to reimburse physicians for trauma care delivery in Maryland and helped to sustain the extensive Maryland trauma care system with his legislative efforts.

During his career, Dr. Caruso has been a national spokesman for Doctors for Medical Liability Reform and a board member of Blue Chip Surgical Partners. He has a vision of providing comprehensive spine care and was the driving force behind Parkway, an integrated treatment facility that features an ambulatory surgery center, imaging center and physical therapy.

Dr. Caruso is board-certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery and a member of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons. He performs numerous procedures, including minimally invasive surgery, complex instrumentation and lumbar spinal surgery.

Dr. Caruso earned his medical degree from Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk and completed his residency at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. He then went into private practice with Neurological Specialists and has more than 16 years of experience in the field.

John Dietz, MD, OrthoIndy, Indianapolis

Dr. Dietz is a spine surgeon with OrthoIndy, a large physician practice that also includes the Indiana Orthopaedic Hospital. Dr. Dietz is the chairman of the board of managers for IOH and remains active in the North American Spine Society, Scoliosis Research Society and American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. As a former Army orthopedic surgeon, he is a member

of the Society of Military Orthopaedic Surgeons as well.

Throughout his career, Dr. Dietz has contributed to spine device and technique innovation. He has been awarded patents on surgical instruments used in endoscopic spine surgery and has published research in several medical journals. Additionally, Dr. Dietz has presented at several national meetings of orthopedic surgeons.

Dr. Dietz earned his medical degree from Duke University School of Medicine in Durham, N.C., and completed his residency in orthopedic surgery at Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma. His additional training includes a fellowship in spine surgery at Swedish Hospital Medical Center in Seattle. He has a professional interest in treating scoliosis, spine trauma and cervical spine disorders.

Charles Gordon, MD, Founder of Precision Spine Care, Tyler

Dr. Gordon is founder of Gordon Spine Associates — now known as Precision Spine care — and co-founder of Texas Spine & Joint Hospital, a privately-owned hospital focused on orthopedic and spine procedures. The hospital includes inpatient acute care, outpatient surgery and ancillary imaging services. Throughout his career, Dr. Gordon has advocated for spine research and stays on the cutting edge of laser technique and stem cell use.

More recently, Dr. Gordon has been on the front line of using early genetic detection of potential spine and neurological problems. He founded the device company Flexuspine and has received patents for more than four spinal devices. He is an affiliate of the North American Spine Society, Texas Association of Neurological Surgeons and American Association of Neurological Surgeons.

In addition to his clinical work, Dr. Gordon is the author of a photographic essay titled "In Plain Sight: Seeing God's Signature throughout Creation."

He earned his medical degree at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and completed his internship and residency in general surgery at Medical College of Virginia. His additional training includes a fellowship at Medical College of Virginia.

Stephen Hochschuler, MD, Co-Founder of Texas Back Institute and Chairman of Texas Back Institute Holdings Corporation, Plano

Texas Back Institute was among the first private practices focused on spine surgery founded in the United States with a concurrent mission of educating future surgeons. Dr. Hochschuler, along with Ralph Rashbaum, MD, founded Texas Back Institute in 1977 with the goal of providing specialty spine care, fellowship training, research and new product development. The group's nonprofit research foundation was established in 1985 and the Texas Back Institute Spine Surgery Fellowship Program in 1986.

During his career, Dr. Hochschuler was a founding member and president of the Spine Arthroplasty Society, now known as the International Society for the Advancement of Spine Surgery. He continues to serve as a founding member of the board of directors. He is also a founding member of the American Board of Spinal Surgery and is a member of the North American Spine Society.

Dr. Hochschuler has served on the medical board of several device companies and was founding chairman of Innovative Spinal Technologies. He has been chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board of Physicians for Alphatec Spine and on the company's board of directors. He was on the business advisory board for DePuy Spine and co-founder of Spinal Technologies. Additionally, he is on the advisory board for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Picower Institute for Memory and Learning and clinical instructor for the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School department of orthopedics in Dallas.

Dr. Hochschuler earned his medical degree at Harvard Business School in Massachusetts, where he also completed his general surgery residency. His additional training includes an orthopedic surgery residency at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School and Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas.

James J. Lynch, MD, FRCSI, FAANS, Founder and CEO of SpineNevada, Reno

During his more than 20 years in the field, Dr. Lynch has focused his attentions on advancing the field of spine surgery and outpatient procedures. He currently performs more than 500 spine surgeries per year in both the hospital and outpatient setting, including more than 200 cervical spine fusions per year. He also serves as partners and director of spine services at Regent Surgical Health.

Earlier this year, Dr. Lynch earned the Top Neurosurgeon in Nevada honor from The Leading Physicians of the World. He serves as a board member for the High Fives Organization, a non-profit foundation dedicated to raising money and awareness for athletes that suffered life-altering injuries while pursuing winter action sports. Dr. Lynch also lectures nationally on outpatient spine surgery and serves as chairman and director of spine programs at the Surgery Center of Reno.

He has a special interest in minimally invasive spine surgery, complex procedures, spinal deformities and trauma. In addition to his clinical work, Dr. Lynch has published in several spine-focused journals, including The Journal of Neurosurgery and Spine. He is a fellow of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons.

Dr. Lynch earned his medical degree at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, and completed a residency at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. He is one of few spine surgeons to have completed three spine fellowships: one at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in Queens Square, London; a second focused on spine surgery at Mayo Clinic; and a third studying spine under Volker Sonntag, MD, at the Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix.

John Pelozo, MD, Director of the Center for Spine Care, Dallas

Dr. Pelozo is a founding partner of the Center for Spine Care and Minimally Invasive Surgery Institute, an ambulatory surgery center opened in 2011 as a partnership with Meridian Surgical Partners. The outpatient facility includes the O-arm Spine Surgical Imaging System with StealthStation Navigation.

He was one of the first spine surgeons and clinical researchers in Dallas to use mesenchymal stem cells to treat degenerative disc disease. He has been active in using biologic solutions to promote disc and joint healing.

Dr. Pelozo is a pioneer in minimal access spinal surgery and was instrumental in launching the SEXTANT, MET-Rx and MAVERICK total disc replacement. He was among the first surgeons to use the coflex Interlaminar Technology for motion preservation in the United States.

He is a member of several professional organizations, including North American Spine Society and American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. Dr. Pelozo earned his medical degree at Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago and completed his residency at the University of Texas

Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. His additional training includes fellowships in knee and shoulder reconstructive surgery and spine surgery, and he served as a spine consultant to the United States Ski Team.

Kenneth A. Pettine, MD, Founder of Rocky Mountain Associates in Orthopedic Medicine, Loveland, Colo.

Dr. Pettine co-founded Rocky Mountain Orthopedics in 1991 and then The Spine Institute — formerly Rocky Mountain Spine Arthroplasty Specialists — in 2004. He is a pioneer in minimally invasive outpatient spine surgery and has dedicated his efforts to transitioning appropriate spinal cases into the outpatient ambulatory surgery center setting. He is the driving force behind the Society for Ambulatory Spine Surgery, founded in 2011 to help educate surgeons in the safety and efficacy of ambulatory surgery. The society's goal is to have more than 50 percent of spine surgeries performed in an ambulatory environment.

In addition to his clinical work, Dr. Pettine has contributed to significant advances in spinal implants and technique. He is the co-inventor of the Maverick artificial disc, Prestige artificial disc and currently serves as the chief FDA IDE investigator for the Raymedica lumbar nucleus disc replacement. His additional work with spinal implants includes the Spinal Motion cervical and lumbar total disc arthroplasty, Neodisc cervical disc replacement, Abbot Wallis device, DePuy Discover cervical disc replacement, Facet Solutions Acadia lumbar facet replacement and Paradigm Spine Coflex interspinous device.

In 2011, Dr. Pettine founded the Orthopaedic Stem Cell Institute to provide stem cell therapy to patients with certain orthopedic injuries as an alternative to therapy. Institute physicians use an autologous stem cell therapy with X-ray guidance to perform the procedure in an outpatient ambulatory surgery center.

Dr. Pettine is a member of the North American Spine Society, International Society for the Advancement of Spine Surgery, International Spinal Injection Society and American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. He earned his medical degree at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and completed his residency in orthopedic surgery at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. His additional training includes a fellowship at the Institute for Low Back Care in Minneapolis.

Frank Phillips, MD, Director of the Section of Minimally Invasive Spine

Surgery at Rush University Medical Center, Chicago

Dr. Phillips was among the early adapters of minimally invasive spinal surgery techniques and has spent his career pioneering the field. He is a founder, board member and past president of the Society for Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery and has developed a number of techniques now widely performed. He has a special interest in minimally invasive cervical and lumbar reconstructive surgery and was a driving force behind the development of the Midwest Orthopaedics at Rush Minimally Invasive Spine Institute last year.

Throughout his career, Dr. Phillips has participated in research and development, and served as a principle investigator on FDA trails for cervical disc replacement. He frequently directs spinal education courses for other surgeons and lectures extensively. His research awards and publications are numerous and he continues to develop research in minimally invasive spine surgery, cervical reconstruction and intervertebral disc biology and regeneration. Before joining Rush, Dr. Phillips was the director of the Spine Center at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Phillips is a member of several professional societies, including the North American Spine Society, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, International Society for the Advancement of Spine Surgery and Cervical Spine Research Society. He also serves on the board of directors for the International Advocates for Spine Patients, an organization focused on advocating for accessible and cost-effective spine care for patients around the world.

Dr. Phillips earned his medical degree at the University of Witwatersrand Medical School in South Africa and completed his residency at the University of Chicago Hospitals. His additional training includes a fellowship in orthopedic surgery at Case Western Reserve in Cleveland.

David Rothbart, MD, FAANS, FACS, FACPE, Founder of Spine Team Texas, Southlake

Dr. Rothbart is the founder and medical director of Spine Team Texas, where he has a professional interest in minimally invasive spine surgery. At the end of 2005, he performed a ground-breaking artificial disc replacement surgery and continues to stay at the cutting-edge of the field.

Previously, Dr. Rothbart served as medical director at Baylor Medical Center

at Irving and Grapevine, and practiced at the Chicago Institute of Neurosurgery. He is a member of the American Board of Neurological Surgery, National Board of Medical Examiners and American Association of Neurological Surgeons.

Dr. Rothbart completed his residency at Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven, Conn., and a fellowship at Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix.

Michael Russell, II, MD, Azalea Orthopedics, Tyler, Texas

Dr. Russell serves as a spine surgeon with Azalea Orthopaedics and board member of the Texas Spine & Joint Hospital. He is the immediate past president of Physician Hospitals of America and continues to serve on the board of directors. He has a special interest in treating spine injury, deformity and degeneration.

In 2010, Dr. Russell and 36 other owners of Texas Spine & Joint Hospital entered into a lawsuit seeking to kill the part of the healthcare reform bill banning physicians from owning hospitals. He is a member of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and National Association of Spine Surgeons.

In addition to his clinical work, Dr. Russell has published articles based on his research and given presentations at national meetings.

Dr. Russell received his bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin. He then attended the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, where he received his MD and completed his residency in orthopedics. Following residency training, Dr. Russell completed a spine surgery fellowship at the Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, N.C., from July 1996 to June 1997.

Richard N.W. Wohns, MD, JD, MBA, Founder and President of NeoSpine, Puget Sound Area, Wash.

Throughout his career, Dr. Wohns has remained on the cutting edge of spine surgery, pioneering the transition into the outpatient setting. A board-certified neurosurgeon, Dr. Wohns founded NeoSpine, where he now serves as president. In 2001, he began developing a national network of outpatient spine surgery centers, which were acquired in 2008 by Symbion. He currently

serves as chief consultant to Symbion for outpatient spine surgery center development.

Dr. Wohns has performed more than 3,000 outpatient cervical and lumbar spine surgeries and published data on these procedures in medical literature. He was one of the first neurosurgeons in the United States qualified to perform the eXtreme Lateral Interbody Fusion technique for minimally invasive lumbar fusions and also has expertise in complex spine surgery and disc arthroplasty.

In addition to his clinical practice, Dr. Wohns lectures nationally and internationally on clinical, business and legal aspects of outpatient spine surgery. He co-founded U.S. Radiosurgery, a company that developed and managed Gamma Knife and Cyberknife Radiosurgery centers throughout the country, which was acquired by Alliance Oncology in 2011. He has served as president of the Washington state Association of Neurological Surgeons and currently serves as the president elect of the Western Neurosurgical Society.

His leadership also extends to device companies, and he serves on the scientific advisory board for Ranier Technology and Thompson MIS. He is a health policy consultant to NuVasive and consultant to LDR. Dr. Wohns earned his medical degree at the Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Conn., and completed his residency in neurosurgery at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Anthony Yeung, MD, Founder of Desert Institute for Spine Care, Phoenix

Dr. Yeung developed the FDA-approved Yeung Endoscopic Spine System and spent his career refining and teaching the technique around the world. Most recently, Dr. Yeung and his wife announced a \$2.5 million donation to the University of New Mexico School of Medicine to found a comprehensive spine center. He has partnered with the University to teach his technique and the new center will continue to pass it along to the next generation of spine surgeons.

Throughout his career, Dr. Yeung has published more than 70 scientific publications and was named "Health Care Hero" by the Phoenix Business Journal. He has been president of the Maricopa County Medical Society and Arizona Orthopaedic Society, and served on the board of directors for the Arizona Medical Association. He is currently the president of the World Congress of Minimally Invasive Spine Surgeons and executive director of the

Intradiscal Therapy Society.

Dr. Yeung and his partners perform outpatient spine surgery at the Squaw Peak Surgical Facility, where he also directs a fellowship program. He is a member of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, North American Spine Society and founding member of the Minimally Invasive Spine Society in the United States. He also serves as the executive director of the International Intradiscal Therapy Society.

Dr. Yeung earned his medical degree at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine and completed his residency at Maricopa County General Hospital in Phoenix.

Christopher Yeung, MD, Desert Institute for Spine Care, Phoenix

During his career, Dr. Yeung has focused on research and innovation, serving as the principle investigator for FDA studies such as the Flexicore lumbar artificial disc replacement, Cervicore cervical artificial disc replacement and DASCOR total nucleus replacement. He serves as the team spine surgeon for the Arizona Diamondbacks, Los Angeles Dodgers, Cincinnati Reds and Arizona Rattlers.

He has several publications and gives presentations around the country on endoscopic spine surgery. He performs the technique developed by his father, Anthony Yeung, MD, for minimally invasive endoscopic spine surgery. He has received the Top Doctor recognition from Phoenix Magazine for several years and was featured in MD News for his work in spine care.

Dr. Yeung is a founding member of the Society for Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery. He is also a member of the North American Spine Society, International Society for the Advancement of Spine Surgeons and American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

Dr. Yeung earned his medical degree at the University of Southern California School of Medicine and completed his residency at the University of California Irvine Medical Center. His additional training includes spine fellowships at the USC Center for Orthopaedic Spine Surgery and Los Angeles Spine Surgery Institute, both in Los Angeles.

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