



What's in a name?

The importance of “and”

The Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES) was founded in 1981 by a small group of surgeons who recognized the importance of flexible endoscopy in a surgeon's toolkit for treating patients with gastrointestinal disease. The society was initially focused on preserving surgeons' privileges to perform flexible endoscopy as well as gathering to disseminate new information at their small, but vibrant annual meetings. The Society's first meeting, held in 1984, was attended by 150 somewhat eclectic surgeons. With the introduction of therapeutic laparoscopy in the early 1990s, SAGES took the lead in creating educational opportunities for surgeons eager to learn laparoscopic techniques. It was a natural and easy transition for many of the early SAGES members to move from flexible endoscopy to videolaparoscopic surgery. SAGES membership rapidly grew as its annual meeting became the premier venue for presentation of laparoscopic firsts. Video presentation became the currency of the realm at these meetings, replacing stilted oral presentations. This fresh approach, as well as emphasis on outstanding postgraduate courses, have made the SAGES meeting the largest annual gathering of surgeons in the United States aside from the fall meeting of The American College of Surgeons.

This fall, SAGES admitted its 5000th member as the society continues to grow. The program content of the annual meeting no longer solely focuses on endoscopic or laparoscopic surgery. Presentations on immunology, gastrointestinal and cardiac physiology, and basic science processes are common. Solid organ surgery, hernia surgery, and even transplantation research are now routinely presented. SAGES has outgrown its original narrow focus, and its membership is now more mainstream than eclectic. Although SAGES has not moved away from its core mission of education and fraternity, the organization and the environment in which its members work undeniably have changed. Recognizing that the organizations must be dynamic and responsive

to change in order to remain vital, the SAGES Board of Governors voted to change the SAGES name to reflect the reality of the society's membership and activities. The change is simple yet profound. The new name is The Society of American Gastrointestinal **and** Endoscopic Surgeons. Addition of the word “and” reflects the fact that SAGES is not just about techniques, but is also the premier venue for dissemination of new knowledge in both minimally invasive surgery and pathophysiology of gastrointestinal disorders.

New techniques are appearing on the horizon that will blur the boundaries among specialists. Endoluminal surgery, transcutaneous energy sources, targeted gene activation, and robotics are just a few of the exciting developments beginning to appear in *Surgical Endoscopy* and at the SAGES annual meeting. A society identified as technique oriented is a society destined for extinction. The subtle name change should convey the message that SAGES is responsive to the need to be inclusive of both new techniques and fundamental organ- or disease-based new knowledge. With a large and diverse membership, SAGES is ready to take up the mantle as a prime voice for general and gastrointestinal surgeons and help the American Board of Surgery redefine the field. As we approach SAGES twenty-fifth anniversary, we must maintain the rebel spirit its founders held in 1981, yet let go of the past to embrace the exciting new developments of the 21st century.

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