

LLRS NEWSLETTER



August 2026

Presidential Update | Jill C. Flanagan, MD, FAAOS

President, Limb Lengthening and Reconstruction Society: ASAMI-North America

Advancing Limb Reconstruction, Restoring Lives. Such a simple phrase, yet one that captures the profound purpose of our Society. Thanks to Dr. Bernstein and our marketing team, we now have a clear and compelling way to communicate what LLRS represents.

As I reflect on our recent Annual Meeting in Montreal, I am reminded of the many moments that exemplify the strength of our community. From engaging scientific debates and heartfelt conversations to the induction of our newest Hall of Fame members—congratulations again to Drs. Birch and Dahl—and the outstanding British Limb Reconstruction Society Symposium, the meeting showcased the very best of LLRS. These memorable moments were beautifully documented by our talented photographer, Spencer Halickman. If you were unable to attend, or if you would like to revisit the meeting, I encourage you to take some time to view the [photographs](#) and meeting highlights.

Over the past year, Dr. Bernstein and I have had many conversations reflecting on what our Board has accomplished together. We are proud to have established a new research scholarship, expanded support by awarding scholarships to residents and fellows to attend the Annual Meeting, partnered with a media consulting firm to enhance our communications, updated our mission and vision statements, and advanced several other important initiatives. None of these achievements would have been possible without the generous support of our corporate partners, to whom we extend our sincere gratitude.

For those who were not able to join us in Montreal, I shared my vision for the year ahead during the Presidential Address. Our priorities remain clear. We are committed to maintaining the Society's financial strength so that we can continue investing in initiatives that directly support our mission and vision.

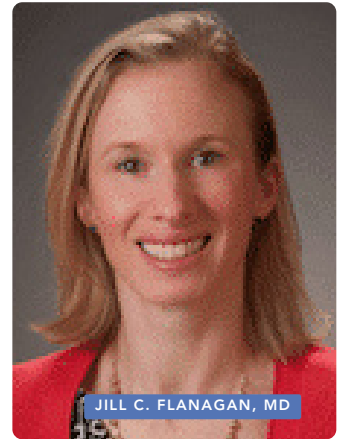
We will further strengthen our international collaborations with the British Limb Reconstruction Society (BLRS), the International Limb Lengthening and Reconstruction Society (iLLRS), and other limb reconstruction organizations around the world. We also remain dedicated to delivering timely, relevant content through multiple platforms, including this newsletter, our podcasts, website, and social media channels.

On a personal note, as I emphasized during my Presidential Address, I encourage every member—particularly our growing membership—to become actively involved in LLRS. As our Society has grown, we have reached the point where we can expand committee opportunities and establish meaningful terms of service. I have been fortunate to benefit from numerous opportunities within LLRS over the past decade, and I hope to provide those same opportunities to the next generation of members. Once our website upgrade is complete, we will announce the process for members to apply for committee service, and I encourage you to consider participating.

Speaking of opportunities, we are pleased to once again offer several prestigious awards and programs, including our Research Grant, the Clinical Scholar Development Program, the LLRS Traveling Fellowship, and our Deformity Education Scholarships. Please watch for announcements through our various communication channels as application periods open.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter. I encourage you to learn more about our newest Hall of Fame inductees, explore upcoming meetings and events, and discover the educational opportunities available in the coming year. I look forward to connecting with each of you throughout the year as we continue advancing limb reconstruction and restoring lives—together.

Best,
Jill



JILL C. FLANAGAN, MD

In this newsletter
you can expect:

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[UPCOMING COURSES &
MEETINGS](#)

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[2026 PEDIATRIC TRAVELING
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MD](#)

[PHYSICIAN WELLNESS: JULIE
BALCH SAMORA, MD, PHD,
MPH](#)

[PHYSICIAN WELLNESS:
HARLEY PASTERNAK](#)

[STAY CONNECTED](#)



36th Annual Scientific Meeting

July 23 & 24, 2027
The Westin Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL

Pre-course – July 22
Beyond the Frame: Intramedullary Solutions for Complex Limb Reconstruction

More information:

VISIT [LLRS.ORG](https://llrs.org)



LLRS/POSNA Specialty Day

March 6, 2027
Las Vegas, Nevada



Registration opens November 2026 - [More information](#)

Journal of Limb Lengthening and Reconstruction (JLLR)

JLLR is the official journal of LLRS-NA
We encourage our members to [submit](#) their
research for the July-December 2026 journal

Review JLLR most recent issue:
Jul-Dec 2025 - Volume 11 - Issue 2



Upcoming Courses & Meetings

36th Annual Baltimore Limb Deformity Course

 Four Seasons Hotel in Baltimore

 August 19–23, 2026

 [More Information](#)

The 7th World Congress of the ASAMI-BR & ILLRS Societies

Breaking the Boundaries of Possible

 Sunway Pyramid Convention Centre, Selangor, Malaysia

 August 27–30, 2026

 [More Information](#)

2027 Congenital Limb Deficiencies & Deformities

 Paley Foundation

 January 18–22, 2027

 [More Information](#)

Essentials of Lower Extremity Reconstruction (ELER)

 Arthur M. Blank Hospital Atlanta, GA

 January 22–23, 2027

 [More Information](#)

Hospital for Special Surgery Deformity Course

 February 5, 2027

British Limb Reconstruction Society (BLRS) 2027 Annual Meeting

 March 11–12, 2027

 [More Information](#)

LLRS Member Spotlight: 2026 Hall of Fame Inductee

John G. Birch, MD, FRCS(C)

John G. Birch MD, FRCS(C) was born in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. The oldest of five children, he moved to Detroit Michigan at the age of two, returning to Windsor at the age of twelve. After completing a degree in Honours Biology at the University of Windsor, he attended medical school at the University of Western Ontario (now Western University) in London, Ontario. A rotating internship at the Ottawa Civic Hospital was followed by four years of orthopedic surgical training in the University of Ottawa Division of Orthopedic Surgery. After successfully passing the written and oral examinations of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada (granting the FRCS(C)) in the Fall of 1980, he completed six months of travelling fellowship (University of Florida Shands Hospital (Gainesville, FL); Newington Children's Hospital (Newington CT), and the A.I. Dupont Institute (Wilmington, DE)), followed by a one-year fellowship in pediatric orthopedic and scoliosis surgery at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children (TSRH) in Dallas. He returned to Ottawa in 1982 to join the orthopedic staff at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO). He was invited to join the full-time staff at TSRH, beginning in September 1984.



John G. Birch MD, FRCS(C)

He practiced as a full-time general pediatric orthopedic surgeon at TSRH where he also served as Medical Director of Ambulatory Care and Assistant Chief of Staff until retiring from direct patient care January 1, 2015. Since then, he has remained active as volunteer consultant medical staff (TSRH) and Adjunct Professor of Orthopedics, University of Texas Southwestern Medical School (UTSW) teaching TSRH pediatric orthopedic fellows and UTSW orthopedic residents; participating in clinical research programs; and providing patient management advice.

Mesmerized by Professor Ilizarov's presentations at the 1988 Tachdjian leg lengthening pre-course, he enrolled in a one-week introductory course to the Ilizarov Method conducted by the Orthopedic surgeons of the Ospedale Generale di Lecco, and returned one year later with his family to spend a further six weeks learning from those talented surgeons.

Expertise in the small patient-centered program Dr. Birch established at TSRH with the support of his colleagues and administrators was exponentially increased by the addition of Drs. Mikhail Samchukov, Marina Makarov, and Alex Cherkashin from the Ilizarov Institute in Kurgan between 1990-1993. With the additional talents of David Ross, Hong Lin, and Dr. Mauricio Delgado, the "TSRH Ilizarov team" developed an early (pre 6-strut) computerized deformity correction planning system; an intraoperative peripheral nerve monitoring program for both upper and lower extremities; a pneumatic wire tensioner; and modifications to traditional Ilizarov and hexapod circular external fixator systems. Professionally speaking, he is proudest of establishing an "Ilizarov clinic" supported by the nursing staff and psychologists at TSRH, which was dedicated to patient education, care, and support through the often-arduous journey of limb lengthening in a pediatric population. He was the first surgeon in North America to insert the Fitbone™ motorized

intramedullary lengthening nail, under FDA Compassionate Use approval, with the support and guidance of TSRH, lifelong friend and colleague Mr. Bruce Foster, Wittenstein IntensTM, and Professor Rainer Baumgart. He served as member of the Board of ASAMI-NA (LLRS) for several years, culminating as President in 2003-4, and presided over the annual meeting in Toronto.

He was awarded the "Harold A. "Pete" Mattson Award for Outstanding Leadership", by the 2011 UTSW graduating orthopedic resident class; "Achievement Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to the profession of Orthopaedic Surgery" from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons in 2012; and "Award of Academic Excellence" by the TSRH Fellows and Staff in 2021-22. In 2021, he was inducted into the Pediatric Orthopedic Society of North America "Hall of Fame".

He is most proud and appreciative, however, of Eleanor, his wife of 42 years; their two children (Craig, pediatric orthopedic surgeon at Boston Children's Hospital, Boston, MA; and Cailin, Global Economist for the Economist Intelligence Unit, London, England); and their two (English!) grandchildren. He enjoys traveling with Eleanor, cycling, jogging, and playing old-man soccer.



LLRS Member Spotlight: 2026 Hall of Fame Inductee

Mark Thomas Dahl, MD

Director of Limb Length and Deformity Correction, Gillette Children's Hospital, St. Paul, Minnesota
Professor of Orthopedic Surgery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dr. Dahl graduated from Mayo Medical School and completed graduate studies in orthopedic surgery at the University of Minnesota. Trained by Dr. David Fischer in the Wagner limb lengthening method in the early 1980's, Dahl sought information on distraction osteogenesis upon his first knowledge in 1983. A visit to Professor DeBastianni was followed by meeting young North Americans including Chad Price, Jim Aronson, George Cierney, Dror Paley, and Stuart Green. He quickly returned to Italy for extended visits with Catagni, Cattaneo, and DeBastianni, and then Professor Ilizarov in Russia. A quest for more knowledge has persisted throughout his 41-year career. Greater patient safety and less invasive techniques in lengthening and deformity correction surgery is a lasting goal for Dahl. He shares his experiences in workshops, lectures and OR's, continuously developing alternative techniques to be used in modern and austere locations around the world.

The immediate Dahl family includes wife Kathy, daughters Dana, Jenny, and Lindsay and six grandchildren. He now plans to diminish the urgent work of patient care and spend more time with family, reading, figurative sculpture in bronze, and fly-fishing as well as all-things outdoors.



Mark Thomas Dahl, MD



Research Grant and Awards

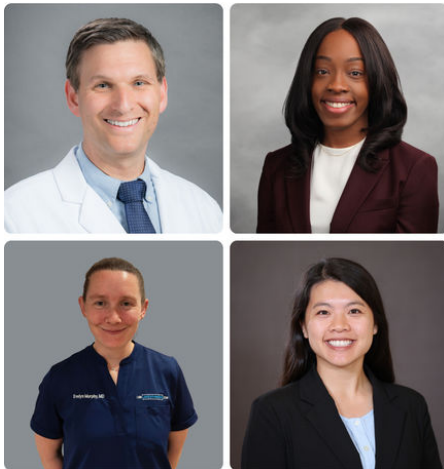
Research Grant

Congratulations to Dr. Christopher Iobst and Dr. Anirejuorise Bafor of Nationwide Children's Hospital, recipients of this year's LLRS Research Award.

Their award-winning research, "*Mechanically Compatible Hyperelastic Bone Scaffold Improves Regenerate Structure-Function During Rabbit Tibial Distraction Osteogenesis*," explores innovative biomaterials designed to enhance bone regeneration during distraction osteogenesis. Their work represents an exciting advancement in regenerative medicine and the future of limb reconstruction.



Deformity Education Scholarship Recipients



Congratulations to the 2026 Deformity Education Fund Scholarship Recipients: Amber Hamilton, Stephanie Kha, Evelyn Murphy, and Elia Newman.

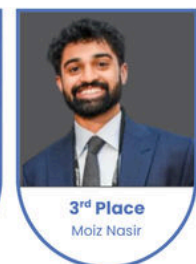
LLRS appreciates the support of its Deformity Education Fund from OrthoPediatrics, Globus Medical, and Orthofix.

Best Paper Recipients

Congratulations to our Best Paper Award Recipients

1st Place - Vaida Glatt, PhD
2nd Place - Sarah Nossov, MD
3rd Place - Moiz Nasir

Read the award-winning abstracts [here](#).



LLRS 2026 Pediatric Travelling Fellows

Daniela Marletta, MD

Current position and institution:

I am currently a final-year resident in Orthopedics and Traumatology at the University of Messina (Messina, Sicily, Italy).

Upon completing my residency, I will begin my professional career at the Children's Hospital of ASST Spedali Civili in Brescia (Brescia, Lombardy, Italy). There, working alongside the Head of Department, I will focus primarily on deformity correction, osteogenesis imperfecta, pediatric traumatology, and pediatric conditions. Among my upcoming educational goals is completing an international or European fellowship in pediatric orthopedics, for which I will submit my application by the end of the year.

What did you find most impactful about your experience in the LLRS Traveling Fellowship?

The most impactful aspect of the LLRS Traveling Fellowship was the direct immersion into various centers of orthopedic excellence, paired with a

continuous exchange of expertise on evaluating and managing the most complex limb lengthening and reconstruction cases. It was extraordinary to interact with patients across surgical and outpatient clinic settings, as well as during mid- and long-term follow-up.

Above all, the human and professional relationships established with the LLRS faculty and members were of invaluable worth. Knowing I can always rely on their support has been an exceptional experience, one that will be fundamental at this early stage of my career when facing challenging cases. Many of them encouraged me to reach out whenever I have doubts, and some even offered to assist me directly in the operating room for the most complex procedures.

What is your favorite memory from the Traveling Fellowship?

My favorite memory is tied to the warm hospitality received at every institution visited and the extraordinary generosity of my colleagues in sharing surgical pearls and life lessons. From every fellowship center, I learned something unique that helped me grow both as a surgeon and as a person.

It was an immense honor to meet in person the professionals whose textbooks and scientific papers I had studied for years. Spending a whole week with those who have written, and continue to write, the history of pediatric orthopedics and limb reconstruction is a privilege that fills me with gratitude and joy.



Daniela Marletta, MD



LLRS 2026 Pediatric Travelling Fellows

Erin Honcharuk, MD

Current position and institution:

Assistant professor of orthopaedic surgery, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, MD, USA

What did you find most impactful about your experience in the LLRS Traveling Fellowship?

I learned an incredible amount during this fellowship. There were a myriad of new tips and tricks I learned to improve my current surgical techniques and make me more efficient, as well as entirely different ways of approaching surgeries that I have already incorporated into my practice. However, I really appreciated everything I learned about improving my patients' outcomes beyond the OR, both on the pre- and post-operative side of treatment. The traveling fellowship is so well-rounded in that regard and really covers a comprehensive approach to pediatric limb deformity.



Erin Honcharuk, MD

What is your favorite memory from the Traveling Fellowship?

There are too many to count! I loved all the hands-on labs and individualized lectures, but especially watching how these masters of the field approach patients and surgeries. I also loved being able to return to hospitals at which I have previously spent time and see familiar faces, as well as get to spend time with those within LLRS who I did not know well previously.



Physician Wellness: Highlights from the 2026 Deborah F. Stanitski Diversity Lecture at the LLRS Annual Meeting

Julie Balch Samora, MD, PhD, MPH

Confidence, Imposter Syndrome & Perfectionism in Surgery

Dr. Julie Balch Samora explored the psychological challenges many surgeons face throughout their careers, including imposter syndrome, perfectionism, and the confidence gap. She discussed how high achievers often underestimate their abilities despite outstanding performance and emphasized the importance of mentorship, supportive leadership, and fostering an inclusive culture where surgeons at every stage feel empowered to grow and succeed.

Key Takeaways

- Even highly accomplished surgeons can struggle with self-doubt and imposter syndrome
- Perfectionism can drive excellence but may also contribute to stress and burnout
- Mentorship and supportive leadership play a vital role in building confidence
- Creating an inclusive, encouraging culture benefits both surgeons and the patients they serve



Highlights from the Alessandro Codivilla Guest Lecture at the LLRS Annual Meeting

Harley Pasternak

How to Make Surgeons Healthier

Celebrity trainer, nutrition expert, and bestselling author Harley Pasternak shared an evidence-based approach to improving surgeon health and longevity. His presentation highlighted how common challenges—including sleep deprivation, musculoskeletal strain, burnout, and poor recovery—can affect both physician well-being and patient outcomes. He encouraged surgeons to view their own health as an essential part of delivering exceptional care, emphasizing simple, sustainable habits that support long-term performance.

Key Takeaways

- Prioritizing sleep is critical for performance, decision-making, and patient safety
- Physical health—including posture, mobility, and strength—helps prevent career-limiting injuries
- Burnout should be addressed proactively through healthy lifestyle habits and recovery
- Taking care of yourself ultimately allows you to take better care of your patients



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