

For Immediate Release
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The American Orthopaedic Association (AOA) Confirms Stephen L. Kates, MD, FAOA as 2026-2027 President

Rosemont, IL, May 15, 2026 – Stephen L. Kates, MD, FAOA was confirmed as the 139th president of the American Orthopaedic Association during the organization’s 2026 Annual Leadership Meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In his presidential address, Dr. Kates focused on the evolving demographics of the United States, the implications of an aging orthopaedic surgery workforce, and the growing demand for musculoskeletal care. He explored potential solutions to address these challenges, including workforce development, innovative care models, and leadership engagement. Central to his message was the critical role of the AOA in advancing orthopaedic leadership and ensuring the specialty is prepared to meet the nation’s current and future orthopaedic needs.

“It is an honor and a privilege to serve the AOA in a leadership capacity at this important time in medicine and healthcare,” said Dr. Kates. “I’m grateful for the leadership, advocacy and support of my colleagues, and all those who have served before me in this role. I’m optimistic we will rise to meet the challenges ahead and create opportunities to continue to deliver the quality orthopaedic care essential to thriving and healthy communities.”

Education and Training

Dr. Kates, received his medical degree from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. He completed his internship and initial residency training in general surgery at Northwestern University in Chicago before pursuing orthopaedic surgery residency at the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York.

A longstanding leader in academic orthopaedics, Dr. Kates has served as a professor and Department Chair at Virginia Commonwealth University for over a decade. He was appointed interim dean of the VCU School of Medicine and interim executive vice president of medical affairs for VCU Health System, effective December 24, 2025, further reflecting his leadership and impact within academic medicine. Dr. Kates is a thought leader on geriatric fracture care. He is the original developer of the Geriatric Fracture Center Model of Care, a program that has been emulated in hundreds of hospitals in the US, UK, Europe, Latin America, and Asia.

Research and Clinical Interests

Dr. Kates' research focuses on the treatment and prevention of bone infections, with an emphasis on improving outcomes and advancing care strategies for complex musculoskeletal conditions.

Clinically, his interests include adult reconstruction surgery, orthopaedic trauma, and the management of musculoskeletal infections, reflecting a comprehensive approach to patient care across a broad spectrum of orthopaedic needs.

About The American Orthopaedic Association

Founded in 1887, and the first orthopaedic association in the world, The American Orthopaedic Association is a small, select organization of elected orthopaedic leaders.

Membership in The American Orthopaedic Association is an earned membership that comes at the end of a stringent peer-reviewed process. Fewer than 10% of practicing orthopaedic surgeons have achieved AOA Membership. Members of The American Orthopaedic Association are referred to as Fellows of The American Orthopaedic Association (FAOA). This designation after a surgeon's name means that the surgeon has achieved recognition for exceptional accomplishments and leadership in the orthopaedic specialty.

AOA programs are designed to provide leadership education for surgeons from residency through retirement. The AOA helps orthopaedic surgeons gain and enhance skills not traditionally taught through formal medical education. This includes leadership development courses, content and tools for those training the next generation of orthopaedic surgeons and providing thought leadership and solutions for critical issues facing the broad orthopaedic community. Find out more at www.aoassn.org, and follow us on X @aoa1887, LinkedIn, and Instagram.