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**AAOS Diversity Award Winner Boris A. Zelle, MD, FAAOS, FAOA  
Recognized for Far-Reaching Diversity and Inclusion Efforts in Orthopaedics**

**SAN FRANCISCO** (Feb. 14, 2024)—Boris A. Zelle, MD, FAAOS, FAOA, was presented with the [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons'](#) (AAOS) 2024 Diversity Award in recognition of his outstanding commitment to promoting diversity at the local, institutional and national level.

The AAOS Diversity Award acknowledges outstanding contributions to advancing diversity in the field of orthopaedics. This award specifically honors AAOS active Fellows and Emeritus members who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to fostering greater representation and accessibility of orthopaedics for diverse populations.

"Receiving the AAOS Diversity Award means a lot to me. I have practiced academic medicine for many years, and I cannot think of any other accomplishment that I have found more meaningful," Dr. Zelle said. "Above all, I consider it a recognition of our combined efforts to support important values that I deeply believe in."

**Community Efforts**

Dr. Zelle is the vice chair of research and chief of orthopaedic trauma in the Department of Orthopaedics at UT Health San Antonio, where he regularly treats an underserved patient population who face challenges of limited access to healthcare, language barriers, food insecurity, malnutrition, and mistrust in the medical system. A previous member of the AAOS Diversity Advisory Board, he is also an active participant in numerous diversity initiatives reaching disadvantaged high school and college students, including the Texas state-wide [Joint Admission Medical Program](#) as well as institutional programs at UT Health San Antonio ("Pathways into Medicine," and "Doc Talks.>").

"While it is not unusual for an orthopaedic traumatologist with a practice at a county hospital to serve socioeconomically disadvantaged patients, it must be emphasized that Dr. Zelle's passion and empathy in caring for these patients goes above and beyond. He takes pride in providing high-quality surgical care to these vulnerable patient populations and has established several mechanisms to address their multiple needs," said Christina Brady, MD, assistant professor at UT Health San Antonio.

**Mentorship**

Over the years, Dr. Zelle has served as a mentor to numerous students, residents and fellows with diverse backgrounds. Within the orthopaedic department at his institution, he created a 1-year orthopaedic research fellowship, consistently filled by minority students, including those who are women, Hispanic and foreign nationals. The program has been running for five consecutive years. This research experience has been instrumental in guiding students into orthopaedic residency training at prestigious institutions.

"A diverse patient population requires a diverse orthopaedic workforce. We must embrace the wide spectrum of diversity traits including age, race, ethnicity, visible disabilities, sex, gender identity and nationality," Dr. Zelle emphasized. "Besides these traditional, surface-level traits, it remains important to recognize deep-level traits, such as beliefs, values, religion, invisible disabilities, socioeconomic background and sexual orientation, just to name a few."

**Impacting the Many—Not the Few**

In his outpatient trauma follow-up clinic, Dr. Zelle has implemented a screening process for identifying and assisting patients facing food insecurity. The project, done in collaboration with the American Heart Association, found that nearly 40 percent of their trauma clinic patients are affected by food insecurity. Patients who are screened as positive for food

insecurity through the process are provided with a food voucher and given information about available resources for food programs. Additionally, he has lead fundraisers for the San Antonio Food Bank and volunteers for the "Under the Bridge" program within his local church, delivering donated food to individuals without housing.

Dr. Zelle also engages in various initiatives aimed at addressing healthcare disparities in vulnerable patient populations. In addition to his local contributions, he has been prolific in orthopaedic publishing over 100 peer-reviewed articles. He has presented his research at regional, national, and international conferences. He has delivered lectures on healthcare disparities and culturally competent care at esteemed national and international organizations.

"While our research has brought important attention to some of these issues, the orthopaedic community still has a long way to go," Dr. Zelle added. "AAOS remains a strong advocate of diversity efforts, and I feel honored and privileged to represent our orthopaedic community."

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#### **About the AAOS**

With more than 39,000 members, the [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#) is the world's largest medical association of musculoskeletal specialists. The AAOS is the trusted leader in advancing musculoskeletal health. It provides the highest quality, most comprehensive education to help orthopaedic surgeons and allied health professionals at every career level to best treat patients in their daily practices. The AAOS is the source for information on bone and joint conditions, treatments and related musculoskeletal healthcare issues; and it leads the healthcare discussion on advancing quality.

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