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AAOS Diversity Award Winner Mary I. O'Connor, MD, FAAOS, Recognized for Lifelong Diversity Advocacy Efforts

LAS VEGAS (March 9, 2023)—The [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#) (AAOS) presented its 2023 Diversity Award to Mary I. O'Connor, MD, FAOA, FAAHKS, FAAOS. The Diversity Award recognizes members of the AAOS who have distinguished themselves through their outstanding commitment to making orthopaedics more representative of, and accessible to, diverse patient populations. A nationally recognized leader who has championed diversity in medicine, surgery and orthopaedics, Dr. O'Connor is professor emerita of orthopaedics at Mayo Clinic, as well as past professor of orthopaedics and rehabilitation at Yale School of Medicine. She is co-founder and chief medical officer of Vori Health, an award-winning, nationwide, virtual specialty medical practice designed to treat musculoskeletal pain more effectively.

"I am honored to receive the AAOS Diversity Award and accept it on behalf of all who are striving to make our profession one that provides the best care for every patient. We know that health disparities are real and impact those we serve," Dr. O'Connor said. "Our continued efforts to increase the diversity of our profession and address our own biases remain essential to progress."

After competing as a U.S. Olympic rower, Dr. O'Connor completed her orthopedic residency and fellowship in orthopedic oncology at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., during a time when few women were accepted into training programs. She was invited to join the staff at Mayo Clinic in Florida and wore many leadership hats throughout the organization, including enterprise-wide medical director of the Office of Integrity and Compliance; chair of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery in Florida; medical director for development in Florida; and member of the Florida Executive Operations Team. In 2015, Dr. O'Connor was named the inaugural director of the Center for Musculoskeletal Care at Yale School of Medicine and Yale New Haven Health. In 2021, she transitioned from academic medicine to entrepreneurship as co-founder of Vori Health.

Dr. O'Connor has accomplished many "firsts." She was the first female member of the Musculoskeletal Tumor Society (MSTS), the International Society of Limb Salvage (ISOLS), the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons (AAHKS) and the first female surgeon in The Knee Society. She has also served as president of the Association of Bone and Joint Surgeons (ABJS), AAHKS, ISOLS, MSTS and the Ruth Jackson Orthopaedic Society (RJOS). She is a former member of the Advisory Committee on Research on Women's Health at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md. and is previous chair of the AAOS Women's Health Issues Advisory Board and the AAOS Diversity Advisory Board.

According to Lisa K. Cannada, MD, FAAOS, orthopaedic trauma surgeon from Jacksonville, Fla., working at Novant Health Orthopaedic Fracture Clinic and Hughston Clinic: "Dr. O'Connor has been a leader in the active recruitment of diverse individuals into the field of orthopaedic surgery over the past 20 years. She has served as a role model for women in orthopaedics and other walks of life. She has clearly demonstrated that orthopaedics is not just a specialty for men and that including women improves our ability to care for our patients."

Since its inception in 2010, Dr. O'Connor has chaired the Executive Leadership of Movement is Life, a multidisciplinary coalition which seeks to eliminate racial, ethnic and gender disparities in musculoskeletal health, and leads the Annual National Caucus on Musculoskeletal Healthcare Disparities. Her efforts led the successful

transition of Movement Is Life to a 501c(3) entity in 2022, a strategy that will support expansion of community interventions and health equity programs.

While publishing extensively on research focused on limb salvage in the management of sarcomas, Dr. O'Connor's academic efforts also include investigating gender differences in outcomes related to joint replacement surgery; sex difference in knee osteoarthritis; and the use of stem cells to potentially treat osteoarthritis. She writes a popular quarterly column in Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research entitled, "Equity360: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity." With the goal of supporting women to address bias and disparities in their own health care, she authored the book, "Taking Care of You: The Empowered Woman's Guide to Better Health" (Mayo Clinic Press 2022).

"I remain hopeful that each of us will commit to providing more care, and more equitable care, for the underserved," Dr. O'Connor said. "Let us reach out to engage community leaders and partner with them to address local health inequities. Not only must we be part of the solution, we should also be leaders in these efforts. Only together can we make musculoskeletal care better and more equitable for the communities we are honored to serve. We are all brothers and sisters together on this journey."

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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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