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AAOS Honors Excellence in Orthopaedics with 2025 Humanitarian, Diversity and Leadership Awards

SAN DIEGO (March 12, 2025)— The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) is proud to announce the recipients of its 2025 awards, recognizing outstanding contributions to the field of orthopaedic surgery. This year’s honorees—recipients of the Humanitarian Award, Diversity Award and William W. Tipton, Jr., MD, Leadership Award—have demonstrated exceptional dedication to advancing musculoskeletal care, championing diversity and providing compassionate service to patients worldwide.

“These distinguished individuals embody the highest ideals of our profession,” said AAOS President Paul Tornetta, III, MD, PhD, FAAOS. “Through their leadership, service and unwavering commitment to excellence, they have not only improved patient outcomes but also inspired the next generation of orthopaedic surgeons. Their contributions are a testament to the profound impact our field has in enhancing lives globally.”

AAOS Diversity Award Recipient

Thomas P. Sculco, MD, FAAOS, surgeon-in-chief emeritus, Hospital for Special Surgery and professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York, was presented with the AAOS 2025 Diversity Award in recognition of his outstanding commitment to promoting diversity at the local, institutional and national level. Dr. Sculco’s dedicated and visionary leadership over the past five decades has thoughtfully shaped and established lasting infrastructures that have enhanced diversity among orthopaedic surgeons, addressed healthcare disparities and elevated the quality of patient care.

According to orthopaedic spine surgeon and President of the J. Robert Gladden Orthopaedic Society Susan E. Stephens, MD, FAAOS, “Dr. Sculco has embodied and lived diversity in orthopaedics. He has trained under his leadership more Black and Women Orthopaedic surgeons than any other majority training program in the world. The excellence of his trainees speaks for itself in their success by all standards. Dr. Sculco never stops leading by example and continues through his personal mission to impact healthcare disparities by creating an honorable legacy of excellence in diversity in orthopaedic surgery.”

AAOS Humanitarian Award

The AAOS honored Coleen S. Sabatini, MD, MPH, FAAOS, with the 2025 Humanitarian Award for her exceptional dedication to caring for children with musculoskeletal conditions both domestically and abroad. A pediatric orthopaedic surgeon based at the University of California San Francisco Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland in Oakland, Calif., Dr. Sabatini believes that all children should have access to high quality, safe and affordable orthopaedic care. Her work abroad has focused on pediatric orthopaedic education and capacity-building to improve access to quality care for children with musculoskeletal conditions, along with conducting research on treatment of musculoskeletal problems for children in resource-limited settings. Her efforts have had a profound impact worldwide, particularly in Uganda, where she has focused much of her work since 2013.

According to Lisa L. Lattanza, MD, FAOA, FAAOS, chair of Yale Medicine Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation, “While I admire all the work Dr. Sabatini does in the United States, Uganda and other countries, I believe her greatest contribution will be the legacy she leaves as a mentor. She has formally and informally mentored dozens of other orthopaedic surgeons, promoting her values of domestic and international care equity to the

next generation. Dr. Sabatini’s career based on selflessly supporting international pediatric musculoskeletal health, addressing disparity issues in the United States, promoting those values in service of the AAOS volunteer structure.”

William W. Tipton, Jr., MD, Leadership Award

The Tipton Leadership Award recognizes AAOS members who have demonstrated outstanding leadership qualities that have benefitted the orthopaedic community, patients and/or the American public. The award honors and celebrates the life, accomplishments and qualities of the late William W. Tipton Jr., MD, an orthopaedic surgeon, educator and former AAOS chief executive officer.

The 2025 recipient of the William Tipton leadership award is Steven Gitelis, MD, FAAOS, Rush Medical College Endowed Professor of Orthopedic Oncology and Director of the Rush Musculoskeletal Oncology Program. A leading expert in Orthopaedic oncology and limb reconstruction, Dr. Gitelis is celebrated for his pioneering surgical treatment of bone and soft tissue sarcomas and steadfast commitment to patient care. Currently he serves as the Chief Medical Officer of Onkos, a company focused on innovative cancer care. When he joined Rush more than 40 years ago, the institution lacked a dedicated sarcoma program—under his leadership, it has grown into one of the largest in the region. He created and mentored the Rush Multi-Specialty Musculoskeletal tumor board to optimize patient care. During his long career, he was elected and served as President of seven Medical Organizations including the Musculoskeletal Tumor Society. He also founded Illinois’ first tissue bank and has served as its medical director for over 30 years, overseeing its growth into one of the largest in the United States. Beyond his clinical and research contributions, Dr. Gitelis has been a dedicated mentor, shaping the next generation of Orthopaedic leaders. He served in the United States Navy during the Persian Gulf War where he provided cancer care and educated military Orthopaedic surgery residents. Through collaboration and education, he continues to bridge the gap between research, practice and training to ensure a strong future for the field.

To learn more about the 2025 AAOS Award recipients or to schedule an interview, email media@aaos.org. Read more about the AAOS Member Recognition Awards criteria [here](#).

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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 best treat patients daily. The AAOS is the source of 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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