

AO

SPINE

Middle East and Northern Africa

# AO Spine Middle East and Northern Africa Newsletter

## Autumn 2020





# CONTENTS

03

From the editor

---

04

Board and Council news

05

Meet a member

05-09

**Education:**

AO Spine Global Diploma Exam

Messages from the GCC, West Africa, Egypt,  
and Algeria

Online Davos Courses 2020

Hospital Based Seminars

10-11

**Community Development:**

AO Spine Membership brochure

Special renewal discount

AO Spine at the Saudi Spine Society Annual  
Conference

12

**Research**

13

Global Spine Congress 2021



# From the Editor

This autumn issue of the “MENA Region Newsletter” comes through and after very hard times of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, many countries were in lock-down for varying periods. The pandemic continues on while the number of cases as well as human losses are increasing. This pandemic casts its shadow on every single aspect of the globe’s human life including education.

Our region (Middle East and Northern Africa) with its specific social and economic criteria was much affected. Meanwhile our team (members and councils) respond to the situation and continue education and socializing using the emergent technology of online teaching. A huge number of webinars were arranged by different councils in the regions with hundreds of distinguished faculties and thousands of enthusiastic attendees. Many previously arranged face to face courses and seminars were cancelled and were replaced by online activities. This status is still going on and the exact time to shift to the original conditions is not decided yet.

I have to say that this autumn Newsletter issue comes just weeks after beginning my role as the AO Spine Middle East and Northern Africa Community Development Officer. I hope to do my best to keep the members and council officers more engaged and more productive scientifically and socially.

I would like to thank Mary Anne Smith, Francois Brayka, Mie Jojima, and the all the MENA team for their continuous support.

*Ali Abou-Madawi*

**Ali Abou-Madawi**

Editor of the Newsletter

AO Spine Middle East and Northern Africa Community Development Officer

aamadawi@gmail.com

# AO Spine Middle East and Northern Africa Board



Waleed Awwad (Research) Muhammed Assous (Spine Centers & Fellowships), Amer Aziz (Chairperson-elect), Mohammad El-Sharkawi (Chairperson), Atiq Uz Zaman (Education), and Ali Abou-Madawi (Community Development)

## Governance

### AO Spine Saudi Arabia Council

On behalf of the AO Spine Saudi Arabia Council election's Nominating Committee, we are pleased to announce **Mahdi Bassi** as Waleed Awwad's successor as Council Chairperson, who began his three-year term on October 1, 2020.

The Saudi Arabia members have also elected two new officers whose terms will begin on February 1, 2021:

- **Faisal Konbaz** as Education Ortho
- **SalahAddeen Khalifah** as Research, Spine Centers and Fellowships

Please join us in congratulating and wishing them success in their new roles!



We would like to thank **Waleed Awwad** for his great achievements to develop AO Spine in Saudi Arabia, and also extend our gratitude to the engagement of council officers **Abdulwahed Barnawi** and **Saleh Alsulaimani**.

## MENA Board Decisions

Please be aware of the following two Regional Board decisions that were passed recently:

### Membership

**50% membership fee discount** for Residents/Students (max 7 years from the beginning of Residency) including Assistant Lecturers, provided this is confirmed in their letter of Residency. Once the seven years are over, Residents must modify their membership status.

### Elections

Residents must be members for **at least two consecutive years** in order to vote in an election.

# Meet a Member

## Wael Chaaban, UAE



Hi All,

It is a great pleasure to say "Hello" to you and share my experience over the last 12 years as a Neurosurgeon focused on Minimally Invasive and Endoscopic Spine surgery. Like many of us, I became a Neurosurgeon and graduated from a Postgrad University Program and went on to practice with a more traditional approach, with a lack of experience in the more advanced techniques such as Minimal Invasive approaches. Over time I was training and focusing my practice on the Minimal Invasive technique, and with the help of sponsorship from the industry, became a pioneer in many MISS techniques in my country of origin.

I began with Percutaneous Pedicle Fixation and MIS-TLIF, and in a short time was treating Degenerative Deformity with the Transpoas Approach and Fusion (XLIF). Then in 2011 I met a new and exciting world of spine surgery, with an introduction to Endoscopic Spine Surgery.

This approach was influenced by the Industry and was until 2015 when I was given the opportunity to join AO Spine, and I did not hesitate for a moment. After joining AO Spine a world of opportunities to expand my career became available, from access to limitless information and educational material to educational and Hands-on training, just across the corner and around the world, and today these opportunities are even more available and affordable.

Since I became an AO Spine member, I have had the opportunity to participate in many Courses, and to having extra privileges as a participant of the Global Spine Congress. I also received a Global Spine Congress Challenge Coin which was an unexpected and welcome surprise!

A highlight for me was being invited as Faculty to the Minimally Invasive and Endoscopic Spine surgery regional Course in Dubai.

I strongly recommend every Neurosurgeon or Orthopedic surgeon focused in spine to join AO Spine, the largest Society of Spine surgeons around the world, and to take advantage of its limitless and powerful tools that will help take your career to another level.

One huge advantage of being a member of AO Spine is that you have access to a global community who are ready to generously share their experiences and knowledge with you. I too pledge to make myself available to support and help your professional growth.

Sincerely,

**Wael Chaaban T., MD**  
Neurosurgeon, Dubai  
[chaabanw@gmail.com](mailto:chaabanw@gmail.com)

## Education

### AO Spine Global Diploma Exam

The AO Spine Global Diploma Exam enables candidates to demonstrate that they have attained a level of knowledge expected of a specialist spine surgeon after five years of practical experience.

The Diploma Exam is a formal assessment of the knowledge required for the management of patients with spinal disorders. It is not intended to certify the competence of technical skills or the ability to perform surgical procedures. It is not a compulsory or regulatory certificate of competence or excellence.

#### Who is eligible for the AO Spine Global Diploma?

In order to be eligible for the AO Spine Global Diploma exam, candidates must be:

- AO Spine members (if you are not an AO Spine member, **join now**)
- Spine surgeons that have been in practice for at least five years.

To receive the Diploma, candidates will need to pass written and oral examinations.

The content of the examinations (written and oral) is based on the **AO Spine curriculum**.

# Education



## Think Bigger— A GCC Call for Action! Sameh Abolfotouh, UAE

When the COVID pandemic started back in January 2020, no one anticipated that it would have an impact on every single aspect of our lives. We found ourselves in a stressful situation where we are facing a lot of things for the first time.

The lockdown regulations affected surgeons all over the region. We had to think out of the box. With all the courses, seminars, workshops, and meetings canceled, we had to come up with a way to keep in contact with our members and continue passing knowledge and education. We started the idea of online webinars back in October 2019 before the COVID 19 era. Initially, those webinars were targeting our members in the GCC region. Yet what started as local activities have suddenly become a prominent international trend. We were surprised by the high numbers of attendees, which reached above 200 members in some of the webinars. Not just that, we managed to attract an audience from all the five AO Spine regions around the world, with some webinars having attendees from around 60 different countries.

So what made our webinars very attractive to members in an era where every single society, university, institution, and even spine surgery manufacturers are following the same approach? In my opinion, it's several factors that got us there. Choosing attractive topics and influential speakers from all over the world pushed the game to a different level. Another factor which was surprising to me is the number of collaborations that we had with the excellent and very active chairmen of the other AO SPINE MENA chapters. Just when we thought the pandemic could push us apart with all the travel restrictions, it brought us closer with a lot of activities that involved a lot of the region's chapters. No doubt, having a dedicated team of surgeons and project managers who devoted all their efforts for those events to run as smooth and as professional as possible keeping in mind complying with all AO Spine rules and regulations was fundamental. Yet the most important factor, in my opinion, is the power of AO Spine as an international society that surgeons all over the world trust and believe in. It is that novelty of a brand that took generations of excellent spine surgeons and dedicated management to reach the prestigious society that we are all proud of today.

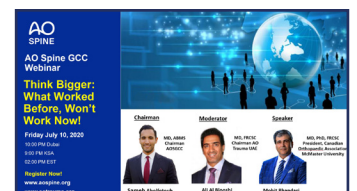
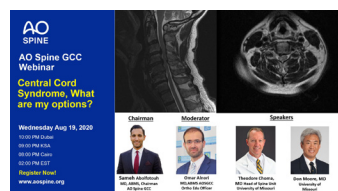
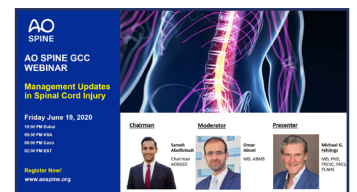
So far, we have conducted ten webinars with more than 1500 attendees from more than 65 countries around the globe. This kind of diversity we previously expected in our major annual events like Global Spine Congress and not from courses or seminars!

As the lockdown eases and life is starting to go back to (the new normal), we are planning for 2021 courses, including the AO Spine GCC course in November 2021. Under the theme of 'The Cervical Spine', we're planning on bringing the leading cervical spine surgeons from around the world to Dubai, UAE. Meanwhile, we will also be continuing with the online webinars and hospital-based seminars to have different types of educational activities that can suit our diverse spine community in the region.

Last but not least, we need to realize that we live in a new era, so Think Bigger! What worked before won't work now!

### Sameh Abolfotouh, MD, ABMS

Chairperson AO Spine GCC



# Education

## Message from the Chairperson of the AO Spine West Africa Council Kabir Abubakar



To say that the year 2020 has been different and a challenge to all things we take for granted would be an understatement. The world has literally been turned 'upside down'. The unprecedented challenges have been met with innovative solutions. This is aptly demonstrated in the response of the AO Community to continue the dissemination of knowledge in spite of restrictions involving travel and large gatherings. It is in this regard that I commend the AO Spine WA Council for taking up the challenge and hosting successful fortnightly webinars over the past few months.

We appreciate the following speakers:

- **Dr Omotayo Ojo**—Management of Sub-axial Cervical Spine Injury
- **Dr Mustapha Alimi**—Management Of Lumbar Degenerative Spine Disease
- **Dr Kabir Abubakar**—Cervical Spondylotic Myelopathy
- **Dr Cajetan Nwadinigwe**—Intraspinal Tumours
- **Professor Augustine Adeolu**—Management of Upper Cervical Spine Injury I
- **Mr Colin Nnadi**—Management of Upper Cervical Spine Injury II
- **Dr Abiodun Adeleke**—Lumbar spinal stenosis
- **Professor Wilfred Mezue**—Lumbar Spondylolisthesis I
- **Dr Harry Akoto**—Lumbar Spondylolisthesis II

They are mostly faculty for AO Spine Courses and we look forward to slots on faculty development courses to develop our faculty base.

I also want to welcome Dr Balogun Simon to the AO community while appreciating Dr Ashaolu Dare for facilitating the 'recruitment'. We need more of such from AO Spine members in the West Africa sub-region.

**Dr. Kabir Abubakar**  
Chairman AO Spine WAC

## Message from Egypt Ali Abou Madawi, Egypt



**AO SPINE**  
Advanced Webinar

AO Spine Local Webinar—  
MISS of degenerative  
lumbar spine

Friday, May 29, 2020  
9PM Cairo (GTM+2)

Register now:  
[Link to be inserted](#)  
A Zoom link to the Webinar will  
be sent one day before starting

**Moderator**  
Dr. Ali Abou-Madawi  
Alexandria, Egypt

**Speakers**  
Dr. Richard Assaker  
Lille, France  
Dr. Pedro Berjano  
Milano, Italy

In Egypt as a part of the Middle East and Northern Africa and in response to COVID-19 and partial country lockdown, we shifted all teaching and educational activities to online activities. The reaction was great and hundreds of faculties with thousands of audiences were involved in large numbers of webinars. The webinars highlighted the collaboration between the MENA councils and that was clear with the Egyptian, GCC, and Jordanian councils. The enthusiasm and commitment were behind the success of such activities. This type of activity crosses country borders and oceans and joins people together despite the restrictions and regulations.

We believe that this kind of activity will continue and improve, even after the fade of COVID-19.

# Register now

Live, online courses December 3–6, 2020  
Online self-directed learning opens October 26, 2020

AO Spine online course

## Endoscopy

October 26–December 2, 2020  
Online Course

December 3–5, 2020  
Live Virtual Event

For more information on  
these courses click here



AO Spine online course

## Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery (MISS) in Degenerative Spine Conditions and Spine Trauma

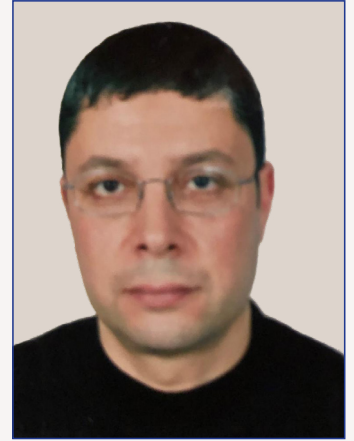
October 26–December 2, 2020  
Online Course

December 3–6, 2020  
Live Virtual Event



# Education

## Message from our Country Representative in Algeria Amin Henine



How can the Maghreb contribute to the local and regional promotion of AO Spine?

It is important to bring help and assistance as quickly as possible to our recently created section to allow its survival in the AO world. Aware of the delay taken and which must be immediately made up for, it is urgent to take the necessary steps as soon as possible and this should lead to the on-site organization of scientific events under the AO Spine brand.

Indeed, if it is necessary to reach as quickly as possible an appreciable quota of new local members, what better chance we have for educational meetings? At least, we can be satisfied at the beginning by organizing some free webinars. The English-speaking colleagues and brothers from the Middle East are very active and we hope with their collaboration, and given their experience and knowledge in the field, to be able to organize online seminars. We also want to do the same with French-speaking friends, especially those from southern Europe.

Thus, a maximum of spine surgeons from Algeria in particular and from North Africa in general, who have the ability to master the French language will be able to join our prestigious association, thus offering it a new opportunity to expand further.

For example, we could first deal with the following topics: adolescent idiopathic scoliosis, lumbar disc herniation, lesions of the lower cervical spine as well as that of the thoracic and lumbar area. However, since one doesn't have to live by expectations, as an individual, I have allowed myself through the opportunities that were available to me each time, to promote ourselves.

First on Facebook, by advertising about us, in particular on three sites, the CLUB DU RACHIS, OrthoScop (Colloque Orthopédie) and l'orthopédie pédiatrique because our young orthopedists are very present, especially at our annual national congresses. It is in particular the one of orthopaedic surgery held in Oran in November 2019 where I introduced two communications, one entitled, Dynamic osteosynthesis of the cervical spine by the Zephir plate and the other, The degenerative surgical spine, as well as that of rheumatology in Algiers in January 2020 and on the occasion of which, I presented my work on Impact of vertebral tuberculosis on balance of spine: Analysis and surgical perspectives.

Belonging to a group means sticking together and so you feel that you are not on the margins of what is being done elsewhere.

### Dr. Amin Henine

Chairperson AO Spine Algeria

Email: [amin.henine@yahoo.fr](mailto:amin.henine@yahoo.fr)

## Hospital Based Seminars (zero-cost)

**Hospital Based Seminars (HBS) are one of the many educational activities that are based on the AO Spine Curriculum. They are aimed at fellows, residents and medical teams, and typically take place in a hospital.**

### Requirements

- One Certificated AO Spine Faculty acts as Chairperson
- Use the ready-made default program
- Use the ready-made default clinical cases
- The content of the clinical case presentations and theoretical material is based on AO Spine's learning outcomes and competences

### Responsibilities of the Hospital

- Provide a room/amphitheater for the seminar
- Provide audio-visual equipment
- Advertise the event locally

### Optional:

- Food & beverages (coffee break) (local sponsor or sponsored by the hospital)
- Local resident to help register participants

### AO Spine's responsibilities

- Provide a standardized digital flyer for advertising
- Provide a virtual learning environment with all educational content & assessments
- Provide and send digital certificates for the participants

Plan a hospital-based seminar in your country, and apply to the Regional Education Officer for approval and advice



The first HBS in Middle East, which was held in Holy City Karbala, Iraq, in collaboration with Imam Zain Al-Abdeen Hospital, Storz and Arab Board in Iraq.

# Community Development

## AO Spine Membership

You believe in AO Spine's mission, and how membership helps us achieve our goals. Now you can better spread the word and share your passion and commitment to improving patient care with other surgeons in your network, thanks to our new AO Spine Membership brochure.

In our new brochure, we explain in simple yet detailed terms, the different paths an AO Spine member can enjoy, be it via Education, Networking, or Research. We also showcase how our leading programs in each of these paths help AO Spine members achieve new levels of expertise, creation of knowledge, and boost their network opportunities throughout their entire careers.

Download our brochure from our website at [www.aospine.org/membership](http://www.aospine.org/membership), and share it with your colleagues today !

## Thank you for supporting us! Enjoy a 20% membership renewal discount!

With the current COVID-19 pandemic and economic challenges, we at AO Spine have been asking ourselves how we can support our loyal surgeons like you.

We know you would like to continue to enjoy your member benefits—new training videos and webinars, peer-reviewed spine journals, and unlimited access to our research training materials or our member directory—which can make a big difference in patient care and outcomes.

Therefore, we are giving a 20% discount on membership renewal fees to all surgeons in your region who were AO Spine members on April 1, 2020. The discount works if you are renewing on the same membership tier.

This ensures that you will be able to access all that AO Spine has to offer as the world's largest academic spine surgeon network. We are there to support you during difficult times, so you can be there for your patients.

Click [here](#), and use your personal code **MENA\_20\_off** to get the 20% discount when renewing your membership. Please make sure that you renew on the same membership tier, as upgrades are not applicable. Simply copy and paste the code into the Discount Code field on the payment information page when renewing.

## The AO Spine virtual booth at the 4th Saudi Spine Society Annual Conference!

From November 7th-9th 2020 we will be virtually present at the fourth Saudi Spine Society (SSS) Annual Conference.

This will be a new experience of online interaction where the participants will have the opportunity to chat with the AO Spine team and Saudi members. We will be offering information about AO Spine, fellowships, our events, and special membership conditions.

There will also be an AO Spine Advanced Symposium on Adult Deformities.

Come visit us there!

[Click here](#) for more information on the SSS Annual Conference.



# Community Development

## Join myAO groups

Interact with your peers in a secure environment

**myAO case discussion groups enable you to interact with other peers, and to discuss and share cases directly on the myAO platform.**

**myAO** is free from third party advertising and marketing. It provides a new way of accessing dependable, verified content. myAO is available for AO Spine members and verified spine surgeons on mobile and web apps.

Download the myAO app and join our current groups. Alternatively, you can create your own safe groups to discuss focus issues.

### **MENA Community**

<https://www.myao.app/group/5f549f2b5273dff06197125>

Join and engage in our myAO Research Discussion Group and share your views on our AO PEER online course, as well as come up with a theme for our GSJ special issue.

### **Research Discussion Group**

<https://www.myao.app/group/5f4d06d4edc47b63f537647d>



Access myAO

## The Challenge Coin



Our AO Spine CD Team designed a collectible souvenir Challenge coin featuring a design on the back that would change every year.

These coins were to be given out as a “thank you” to our members who would join us at the Members’ Assembly during the Global Spine Congress (GSC) in Rio de Janeiro, and who had been members for at least 3 terms, Sadly the GSC, was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, nevertheless, four members from the MENA region received the challenge coin as a thank you for registering.

- Mohamed Abdel-Wanis, Egypt
- Wael Chaaban, UAE
- Mohammad El-Sharkawi, Egypt
- Atiq Uz Zaman, Pakistan

Congratulations on being the first to receive this coveted Challenge coin!

# Research



## Call to all Researchers!

On behalf of **Waleed Awwad**, Regional Research Officer and **Ghazwan Hasan**, Iraq Council Chairperson, we are excited to announce that following the online **AO PEER Course** on October 15-17, we will form several research groups with mentors, and a series of local webinars focusing on the needs of the research groups, and work towards producing research papers to submit to a special MENA issue of the *Global Spine Journal (GSJ)*.

Remember, we are looking forward to receiving your ideas, comments, and suggestions for the next issue of your newsletter!

Please send to Ali Abou-Madawi:  
[aamadawi@gmail.com](mailto:aamadawi@gmail.com)



AOSpine Middle East and Northern Africa  
Stettbachstrasse 6  
8600 Duebendorf  
Switzerland

T +41 44 200 2407  
F +41 44 200 2412  
[aosme@aospine.org](mailto:aosme@aospine.org)  
[www.aospine.org](http://www.aospine.org)



# Paris, France May 5–8, 2021

GSC 2021 GOES HYBRID!



[www.gsc2021.org](http://www.gsc2021.org) • [#GSCParis](https://twitter.com/GSCParis)