From the Editor
Nancy A. Nussmeier, MD
Chair, Department of Anesthesiology
SUNY Upstate Medical University
Syracuse, New York

At Scientific Sessions 2008, AHA President Timothy Gardner, MD, challenged attendees to become citizen leaders with a “passion for prevention” to reduce heart disease and stroke. “Let us remind ourselves that all of us here are de facto leaders in our communities and also citizen leaders in our society,” said Dr. Gardner, a well-known cardiac surgeon. Coincidentally, the AHA message platforms for this winter edition of Connections are “Advocacy” and “Go Red For Women.”

As cardiovascular surgeons and anesthesiologists ponder Dr. Gardner’s message, we should consider the Go Red For Women luncheons, held annually in both large and small communities on behalf of the American Heart Association. These luncheons are well attended by women who have a mother, sister, husband or child with cardiovascular disease. Since women “drive” health care, for their own needs and for their families, speaking at such a venue has a tremendous impact on the audience — and the effect reaches far beyond those in attendance. Having a speaker with a topic such as “What Women Need to Know about Heart Disease” can start with the fact that cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 health threat to women — 38 percent of female deaths are from cardiovascular disease, while only 22% are attributed to cancer. Although a bit scary for a luncheon talk, it is surprisingly effective to speak about: 1) a residual lack of awareness among women and their primary care physicians; 2) the relative “under-treatment” or “late referral” of women for more aggressive interventions, including surgery; 3) the somewhat tougher recovery and less optimal short-term outcomes in women who are eventually referred to surgery; and 4) the excellent long-term outcomes in these women. These points lead nicely into a discussion of prevention, or “how to avoid ending up in my operating room!” Lifestyle changes (smoking cessation, weight reduction and fastidious control of hypertension, hyperlipidemia and diabetes) will substantially reduce risk, as we all know. The keynote speaker can end on a positive note: “Knowledge gives a woman the power to take charge of her health.”

“Go Red” luncheons and other speaking engagements provide a venue for cardiovascular surgeons and anesthesiologists to share their knowledge and passion with an audience that has probably never heard our “take” on heart disease. Don’t pass up the opportunity.

William A. Baumgartner, cardiac surgeon-in-charge, Vincent L. Gott Professor, vice dean for clinical affairs, and president of the Clinical Practice Association at John Hopkins Hospital, was presented with the Surgical Mentoring Award during the annual Council on Cardiovascular Surgery & Anesthesia Dinner held at the famous Antoine’s Restaurant in the historic French Quarter.

Also honored at the annual Council dinner were:
• Distinguished Achievement Award: Dr. Craig Miller, Stanford, Calif.
• Council Fellow: Daniel Richard Meldrum, Indianapolis, Ind.
• Council Fellow: Hitoshi Ogino, Suita, Osaka, Japan
• Paul Dudley White Lecturer: Philippe Menasché

You can review additional highlights of this year’s meeting at www.scientificsessions.org.