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News

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For Immediate Release

Two Honored for Selfless Service and Commitment to The Society of Thoracic Surgeons ***STS Distinguished Service Award recognizes dedication to the Society and the specialty***

SAN DIEGO, CA (January 29, 2019) – In honor of their outstanding work and significant contributions, Douglas E. Wood, MD, and James M. Levett, MD have been presented with The Society of Thoracic Surgeons 2019 Distinguished Service Award at the Society’s 55th Annual Meeting this evening.

“Cardiothoracic surgery is one of the most successful stories in all of medicine,” said 2018-2019 STS President Keith S. Naunheim, MD. “As members of this specialty, we feel a responsibility to give back and make sure that our discipline does not merely survive but that it continues to thrive. That type of success is exactly what Doug Wood and Jim Levett have helped us achieve in the past two decades. Like so many cardiothoracic surgeons before them, they have worked tirelessly to pursue improvements in cardiothoracic care that have greatly benefitted patients and saved lives.”

Douglas E. Wood, MD

Seattle, Washington

An STS member since 1995, Dr. Wood has been a long-time volunteer. He has served on the Society’s Board of Directors as President and as Secretary, as well as held positions on other governance bodies, including the Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Standards and Ethics Committee, Workforce on Health Policy, Reform and Advocacy, and Workforce on Critical Care. In addition, Dr. Wood currently is President of The Thoracic Surgery Foundation, the Society’s charitable arm.

A world-renowned surgeon in thoracic oncology, Dr. Wood specializes in lung and esophageal cancer. He is a national and international leader in the management of complex airway diseases and in the surgical management of end-stage lung disease. He has used that expertise to help secure Medicare coverage of low-dose computed tomography lung cancer screening for at-risk-populations in his roles as Chair of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Lung Cancer Screening Panel and Vice-Chair of the NCCN Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer Panel. Dr. Wood also has represented the Society on the Lung Cancer Guidelines panel of the American College of Chest Physicians.

Throughout his career, Dr. Wood has been a prolific surgeon-scientist, with more than 20 grants and 200 publications. He also has been devoted to graduate medical education. Passionate about working with residents and junior faculty in both US and international programs, he has been a visiting professor at approximately 50 institutions worldwide.

Dr. Wood received his undergraduate and medical degrees from Harvard University and completed his general surgery and cardiothoracic surgery residencies at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. After spending a formative year as

a surgical registrar at the Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney, Australia, he was recruited to Seattle to lead a new section of general thoracic surgery at the University of Washington, where he is currently the Henry N. Harkins Professor and Chair of the Department of Surgery.

“Dr. Wood is respected and admired by his peers. Early in his career one could spot that he was the type of individual who was going places—and he has certainly fulfilled on that prophesy,” said Dr. Naunheim. “Doug has remarkable skills both in and out of the operating room. He has excelled in clinical research and proven adept at building and organizing surgical divisions and departments. He also is an outstanding teacher, unstinting in generosity and never hesitating to shine the light on the achievements of others. Dr. Wood has very ably served our Society for 20 years, and we are much better because of his work.”

James M. Levett, MD

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Dr. Levett—an STS member since 1987—currently is a pivotal member of the Workforce on Coding and Reimbursement and serves as the STS Advisor to the American Medical Association Relative Value Update Committee (AMA-RUC), where he presents proposed coding and reimbursement changes on behalf of the Society. His previous STS experience includes service on the Workforce on Patient Safety and the Workforce on Coding and Reimbursement.

In addition, Dr. Levett has worked diligently behind the scenes to advance key issues facing cardiothoracic surgeons and their patients. In fact, he has met several times with recently elected Congresswoman Abby Finkenauer, who has opposed efforts to defund organizations that offer cancer screenings, preventative care, and other health services. In his conversations with Rep. Finkenauer, Dr. Levett highlighted the importance of the STS National Database and the need for legislation that would facilitate a linkage between clinical data from the Database with Medicare claims data. He also explained the importance of understanding value in health care.

After graduating cum laude from Carleton College, Dr. Levett earned his medical degree from the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine in Iowa City. He completed his general surgery and cardiothoracic surgery residencies at The University of Chicago Hospitals, in addition to post-graduate work in electrophysiology at Duke University Medical Center in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. Before joining his current practice at the Physicians’ Clinic of Iowa, Dr. Levett was Chairman of the Department of Surgery at Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge, IL.

With many years of diverse experience in cardiac, thoracic, and vascular surgeries, Dr. Levett is an expert in process management and the implementation of quality management system principles in health care organizations. In addition, he has authored and/or contributed to more than 100 articles, books, and scientific abstracts.

“Dr. Levett is the prototype of the broadly trained and fully capable cardiothoracic surgeon,” said Dr. Naunheim. “He does it all. That practice scope requires broad knowledge and the experience to be able to expertly treat not only diseases of the heart but also those of the chest wall, mediastinum, lung and esophagus. His remarkable career is emblematic of that kind of ability. He also has contributed literally thousands of hours to further the interests of STS members, as well as their patients, and has asked for nothing in return. No applause. No limelight. Dr. Levett exemplifies the type of unsung hero that deserves this recognition.”

The Distinguished Service Award, established in 1969, recognizes individuals who have made significant and far-reaching contributions to STS and the specialty.

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Founded in 1964, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 7,400 cardiothoracic surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for surgeries of the heart, lung, and esophagus, as well as other surgical procedures within the chest. The Society's mission is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research, and advocacy.