

How I turned an industrial engineering degree into a career in hip and knee replacement



Craig R. Mahoney, MD IA A '91

M.D.

The Talk: I will share my journey from engineering training to a career in orthopedic surgery specializing in hip and knee replacement. I will reflect on the key decisions and turning points that lead me from one profession to another, and how my mindset developed through engineering discipline, curiosity, and problem solving, and how those principles have shaped my approach to medicine

The Speaker: Dr. Craig R. Mahoney is a fellowship-trained orthopaedic surgeon specializing in adult joint reconstruction of the hip and knee with more than two decades of clinical excellence and a strong record of leadership in orthopaedics and healthcare systems innovation. Since beginning his practice in Des Moines in 2002, Dr. Mahoney has performed over 7,000 joint replacement procedures while filling administrative roles for Iowa Ortho, MercyOne Des Moines, Catholic Health Initiatives, CommonSpirit Health, and Trinity Health.

After completing his fellowship in adult reconstruction at the renowned Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, Dr. Mahoney has maintained a busy clinical practice while serving as Vice President/Physician Leader of the Orthopaedic Service Line at MercyOne. He also currently holds the role of Director of Perioperative Services at MercyOne and served as Chairman of the Department of Orthopaedics there from 2007–2012. In addition, he is a partner at the Iowa Orthopedic Center, where he has been instrumental in advancing joint replacement care and improving outcomes.

Dr. Mahoney's leadership extends well beyond the operating room. He has served as President of the Mid-America Orthopaedic Association, the Iowa Orthopaedic Society, and the Polk County Medical Society, and has held board positions with each of these organizations. He served on the Board of Directors for the Polk County Medical Society from 2004–2015, the Mid-America Orthopaedic Association from 2010–2022, and has served on the Board of Directors for the Iowa Orthopaedic Society since 2015. Additionally, from 2013 to 2023, he contributed to healthcare advancement and philanthropic initiatives as a member of the Board of Directors for the Mercy Health Foundation.

Nationally, he served for six years on the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons Board of Councilors, where he was also Chairman of the Economic Issues Committee. He has played an influential role in shaping orthopaedic policy and innovation as a member of the Executive Board for the CommonSpirit Health National Orthopedic Spine Service Line and the Trinity Health Orthopaedic Clinical Excellence Council.

He is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the Castle Connolly Top Doctor award for 13 consecutive years (2014–2026), the Arthritis Foundation of Iowa Tribute to Excellence Award, and Iowa State University's Professional Progress in Engineering Award.

Dr. Mahoney has authored more than forty peer-reviewed articles, case reports, and book chapters, contributing to key publications such as AAOS Now, The Journal of Arthroplasty, JBJS, and Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research. His work spans topics including surgical innovation, healthcare economics, and practice management

Dr. Mahoney's academic foundation is rooted in excellence. He completed his orthopaedic residency at the Creighton/University of Nebraska Health Foundation, where he received the Excellence in Research Award and won the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma Region VII Resident Paper Competition. He also served as a Resident Representative on the New Resident Selection Committee and completed a one-year dedicated orthopaedic research fellowship during his residency.

He earned his medical degree from the University of Iowa, where he held multiple leadership roles, including Treasurer of the Medical Student Council and Graduate and Professional Student Senator. His academic performance earned him several scholarships and an appointment as an Anatomy Teaching Assistant.

Dr. Mahoney earned his undergraduate degree in Industrial Engineering from Iowa State University, where he excelled both academically and athletically. A four-year football letterman, he was named First Team Academic All-Big Eight in 1989 and 1990, a UPI Honorable Mention All-American in 1990, and received the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame Scholar Athlete Award. He was a finalist for the prestigious Campbell Trophy, given annually to the top scholar-athlete football player in America. His scholastic achievements were recognized by his induction into several honor societies, including Tau Beta Pi, Alpha Pi Mu, Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Eta Sigma, and Alpha Lambda Delta.

Outside of medicine, Dr. Mahoney remains deeply engaged with his community. He serves as President of the Iowa Chapter of the National Football Foundation, a nonprofit that honors high school scholar-athletes who excel in academics, athletics, and community service. He enjoys cycling, spending time with friends and family, and reading about non-traditional approaches to health and wellness. He is happily married to his wife Michelle, and together they are the proud parents of two sons, John and Matthew.

Registration link:

<https://tbp-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/BSI8FjZzS2aofF56yLORug>