

Academy Notebook

NEWS • TIPS • RESOURCES

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Academy Vice President of Governmental Affairs Cathy Grealy Cohen Retires

After almost 30 years at the Academy, Cathy Grealy Cohen is retiring on Nov. 9. Before her departure, *EyeNet* asked her about advocacy in ophthalmology.

EyeNet: What do you consider the most significant wins for ophthalmology in the past 30 years?

Ms. Cohen: There have been a number of big reimbursement wins.

In the late '90s, the Academy led the fight for updated practice expenses under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule. This positively impacted specialties, like ophthalmology, that use high-tech practices and expensive equipment. It brought hundreds of millions of Medicare dollars to ophthalmology in 1999 and again 10 years later with a new phase-in of practice expense updates.

After nearly 17 years under the sustainable growth rate formula, repeal of that problematic program and passage of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) immediately brought relief from the annual battles to derail double-digit



MINORITY OPHTHALMOLOGY MENTORING. Participants benefit from the program's expanding resources (see next page). Here, students learn how to suture a pig's eye at Student Engagement Weekend.

cuts to physician payment. It guaranteed small annual increases for five years, beginning in 2016. It's time to reform that payment approach again.

And over the years, ophthalmologists have performed better than other specialties on Medicare quality measurements, such as those that were in the Physician Quality Reporting System and in the current Merit-Based Incentive Payment System, often reaping the maximum bonus offered. This is thanks to Academy guidance and development

of appropriate measures for ophthalmology.

EyeNet: What do you consider the most devastating loss?

Ms. Cohen: The loss of laser eye surgery to optometry in Oklahoma in 1997. This created two tiers of eye care in the state, and a model for scope of practice efforts in other states.

EyeNet: What have ophthalmologists done to make patients safer?

Ms. Cohen: I am particularly proud of our success 16 years ago in protecting veterans with the directive limiting laser eye surgery to ophthalmologists in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA has endorsed the directive three more times since then.

I would also point out the Academy's successful efforts in 1998 to get Medicare coverage for annual eye exams for patients with diabetes.

Lastly, I am proud of the the first preventive eye care benefit, passed in 2000: screening for glaucoma for high-risk groups. Now, Medicare annually promotes this benefit to Black and Hispanic Americans, as well as those who have a family history of glaucoma.

EyeNet: What insights do you have for the future?

Ms. Cohen: The Academy must continue to lead efforts to reform Medicare physician payment, as it is ophthalmology's primary payer. We must have an annual cost-of-practice update like others under Medicare.

Learn more about the Academy's advocacy efforts at aao.org/advocacy.



AMERICAN ACADEMY
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Tailored Support for Students From the Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring Program

The Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring program seeks to increase diversity in ophthalmology by helping students who are underrepresented in medicine become competitive ophthalmology residency applicants. Every year, the program adds resources to address the needs of the Black, Hispanic, and Native American students. This year, support for away rotations, research, and preparation for the match were implemented.

Away rotations. The Away Rotation Program provides financial assistance so that students can have an in-depth experience at an ophthalmology department of special interest to them. In turn, the department leaders get to know the student.

Research. Getting involved in research shows curiosity, passion, commitment, and work ethic—all qualities that help students' applications. The Research Grant Program offers funding for students' ophthalmic research projects or assistance in obtaining a mentor to guide their research.

Match preparations. The Match Prep Program prepares students who are applying for the ophthalmology match in the current year. Sixteen students are participating in this inaugural year. The program incorporates one-on-one coaching; review of personal statements, essays, and CVs; an interview skills workshop; and mock interviews so that students can present their best selves, as they advance in their journey to becoming ophthalmologists.

Support the students. If you would like to help support the students, consider serving as a mentor or speaker. To get started, complete the interest form at aao.org/volunteering, then choose "Connect" and "Mentor an Underrepresented in Medicine (URiM) Student."

TAKE NOTICE

Nominate a Colleague for the 2023 Laureate Award

Every year, ophthalmologists distinguish themselves and the profession by making exceptional scientific contribu-

tions toward preventing blindness and restoring sight worldwide. The Academy Board of Trustees recognizes these extraordinary contributions with its Laureate Award, the Academy's single highest honor. The award recipient is announced each fall, and the Laureate is recognized during the Opening Session of the annual meeting.

Nominate a colleague using the application at aao.org/laureate by Jan. 31, 2023.

Seeking Outstanding Ophthalmologists

Would you like to nominate a colleague for next year's Outstanding Humanitarian Service Award? Submit your nomination by April 15, 2023.

This award recognizes Academy fellows and members for outstanding contributions to humanitarian efforts, such as participation in charitable activities, care of the indigent, and community service. It acknowledges those who have performed above and beyond the normal duties of an ophthalmologist.

To obtain a nomination form, contact Member Services by phone, 866-561-8558 (toll-free) or 415-561-8581; by fax, 415-561-8575; or by e-mail, member_services@aao.org. You can also complete a nomination form online at aao.org/about/awards/humanitarian.

Celebrate Giving Tuesday With a Gift to the Academy Foundation

After you finish your holiday shopping on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, kick off your year-end charitable donations on Giving Tuesday, Nov. 29. During this globally recognized day of philanthropy, you are encouraged to donate to initiatives that are important to you.

This year, consider supporting Academy programs such as the Ophthalmic News and Education Network, the Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring program, EyeCare America, and the Parke Center Campaign through a donation to the Academy Foundation. Your tax-deductible gift can be made in honor or memory of someone

special, or it can be a recurring gift.

Give today at aao.org/foundation/giving-options.

Now Available! Read the 2022 Foundation Annual Report Online

It's been a challenging year, but the Academy's loyal donors still came through with generous support that shapes the success of Academy programs. Members supported the Academy in operating the Truhlsen-Marmor Museum of the Eye; launching a new campaign to build a state-of-the-art meeting center named for former CEO David W. Parke II, MD; running EyeCare America; increasing funding for the Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring program; updating the Ophthalmic News and Education Network; and so much more.

Read about the ways your generosity helped at aao.org/annualreport.

Volunteer: Present a Practice Management Instruction Course

Each year at the Academy's annual meeting, the American Academy of Ophthalmic Executives (AAOE) offers more than 70 instruction courses (each 75 minutes in duration) that address a variety of practice management challenges.

You can be a part of AAO 2023 by presenting a practice management instruction course. Your instruction course should be engaging, well-organized, and accurate; address a pertinent need in practice management; and, if relevant, provide actionable strategies.

Abstract submissions open Dec. 8, 2022, and close Jan. 10, 2023, at aao.org/presentercentral.

Learn more at aao.org/volunteering, then choose "Speak." (This is just one of many Academy volunteer opportunities.)

ACADEMY RESOURCES

Attend the Neuro-Ophthalmic Disease Webinar

On Nov. 10, 8:30-10:00 p.m. ET, join moderator Valerie Elmaleh, MD, for a webinar titled "Diagnosis and Manage-

ment of Neuro-Ophthalmic Disease: The 2022 Update on Neuro-Ophthalmology" (1.5 CME). Developed in coordination with the North American Neuro-Ophthalmology Society, this Academy program is free to members.

This webinar will cover topics including:

- visual snow and chronic eye pain,
- strabismus post-neurosurgery,
- idiopathic intracranial hypertension stenting,
- approach to functional visual loss, and
- Leber hereditary optic neuropathy workup and treatment.

Learn more at aao.org/clinical-webinars.

MEETING MATTERS

Mark Your Calendar for AAO 2023

AAO 2023 will take place in San Francisco, Nov. 3-6 (with Subspecialty Day meetings beginning on Friday, Nov. 3).

Be part of the meeting. The online abstract submitter for instruction courses and new Skills Transfer labs opens Dec. 8, 2022, and closes Jan. 10, 2023. Learn more at aao.org/presenter-central.

For details, visit aao.org/2023.

You Can Still Register for AAO 2022 Virtual

Even if you missed the live broadcast of the virtual meeting Sept. 30-Oct. 3, you can register for AAO 2022 Virtual.

AAO 2022. Experience the recorded content from AAO 2022 when you register for the virtual meeting. More than 140 sessions and courses are available to view on demand through the AAO 2022 Virtual meeting platform.

Subspecialty Day. Register separately for Subspecialty Day Virtual—Friday (which includes glaucoma, pediatric ophthalmology, refractive surgery, retina, and uveitis content) and Subspecialty Day Virtual—Saturday (which includes cornea, oculofacial plastic surgery, and retina content). You will gain access to all sessions recorded in Chicago for the Subspecialty Day meetings taking place on the same date.

In-person registration benefit.

D.C. REPORT

Academy Fights to Protect Quality Eye Care for Veterans and Active-Duty Military

In recognition of Veterans Day on Nov. 11, below are a few ways that the Academy fights to protect sight and empower the lives of Americans who serve their country.

Federal Supremacy Project. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is moving forward with its Federal Supremacy Project, developing national standards of practice for 50 categories of health professionals, including optometrists. The Academy has advocated that quality care and safety be the prime consideration in any policy or rule related to veterans' health care services. The Academy is engaging with veterans' groups and ophthalmologists who served in the military to ensure that their voices are heard and considered throughout this process.

The VA has maintained a longstanding policy stipulating laser eye surgery in Veterans Health Administration facilities be performed by ophthalmologists, a policy that was renewed on three separate occasions, most recently in May 2020. Now, as the VA sets a national standard for the profession, the Academy supports maintaining this patient safety policy while optometry will be pressing for its elimination.

American Legion National Convention. For more than a decade, the Academy has provided glaucoma and eye screenings to veterans and their family members attending the American Legion's National Convention. For the event held Aug. 26-Sept. 1 in Milwaukee, the Academy partnered with the Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology to do this.

Ocular trauma centers open. The Academy works to ensure care for active-duty service members. In 2021, Congress passed Academy-backed legislation establishing U.S. Department of Defense regional centers providing enhanced treatment of active-duty service members' ocular wounds and/or visual dysfunction related to complex ocular polytrauma and traumatic brain injury. In April, the first center opened at Brooke Army Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Vision Research Program. The Academy joined the vision research community in asking Congress for \$30 million to fund the Department of Defense peer-reviewed Vision Research Program for fiscal year 2023.

Learn more at aao.org/advocacy/veterans-eye-care.

If you registered for the in-person meeting in Chicago, you automatically have access to the corresponding virtual content for that meeting.

Access. The virtual meeting platform is open through Jan. 31, 2023. After Jan. 31, you may still view content online. Go to aao.org/myonlineproducts, log in, and choose the virtual product you registered for: AAO 2022 and/or Subspecialty Day. You will be able to access sessions on demand and claim CME credit (professional attendees only) through Aug. 1, 2023.

Learn more at aao.org/2022.

Claim CME Through Aug. 1, 2023

Claim CME credits for attending the live meeting or viewing virtual sessions through Aug. 1, 2023. You can claim some credit in 2022 and some in 2023, or all in the same year. Limits are up to 50 credits for AAO 2022 and up to 12 credits per day for Subspecialty Day.

You do not need to track which sessions you attend, just the total number of hours you spend in sessions for each claim.

For more information, visit aao.org/annual-meeting/cme.