

# Academy Notebook

NEWS • TIPS • RESOURCES

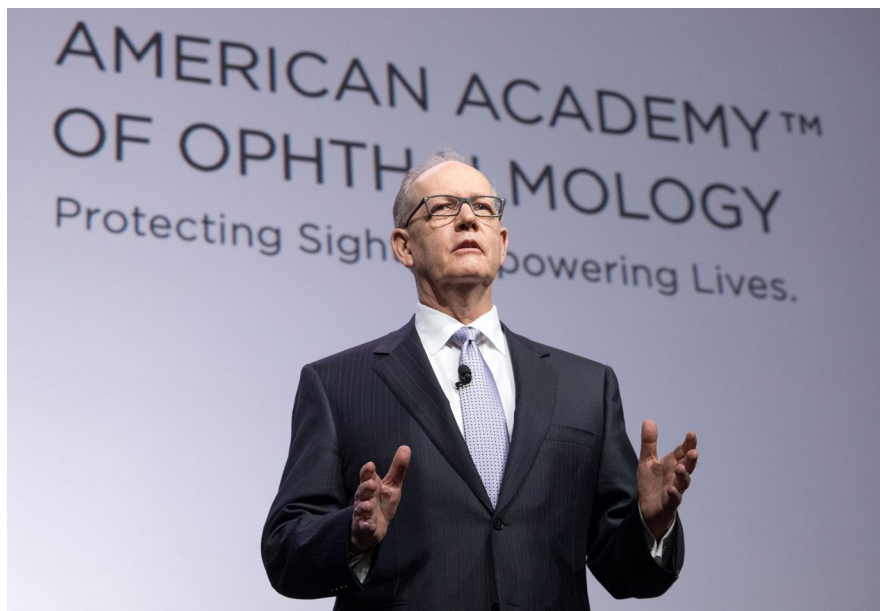
## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### Dr. Parke to Step Down as Academy CEO, Search for Next Leader Underway

On April 23, Academy CEO David W. Parke II, MD, announced to the Board of Trustees that he wishes the Academy to choose his successor. The Board of Trustees has created a committee to begin the search process with the goal of putting the new CEO in place by the end of the year. Dr. Parke has committed to staying on until his replacement is found.

**Dr. Parke's tenure.** During his 12 years as Academy CEO, Dr. Parke has overseen the founding of the IRIS Registry, the launch of the Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring program, and the creation of the Truhlsen-Marmor Museum of the Eye. He also expanded the *Ophthalmology* journal family, raised an unprecedented amount of funding to support the profession, and led the Academy's response to COVID-19.

"Helping to lead the American Academy of Ophthalmology and serve my colleagues and their patients has been, and always will be, the highlight of my professional career," Dr. Parke said. "It is an honor to work with the dedicated professionals who staff the Academy and who volunteer in its



**STEPPING DOWN.** During his 12 years as Academy CEO, Dr. Parke has overseen the founding of the IRIS Registry, the creation of the Truhlsen-Marmor Museum of the Eye, and the Academy's response to COVID-19.

initiatives. I couldn't be prouder of the work they do and its impact. I pledge to remain active in whatever way best serves the organization and my beloved profession."

**CEO applications due July 6.** Candidates for the CEO role must be an Active or Life Fellow of the Academy; have an active, unrestricted license to practice medicine; have experience in leadership and organizational management; and be willing to live in commuting proximity to the Academy headquarters in San Francisco.

### Highlights of the Second Virtual Congressional Advocacy Day

On May 5, more than 180 ophthalmologists, including Members in Training, from across the country participated in a virtual Congressional Advocacy Day. These ophthalmology advocates urged lawmakers to improve Medicare payments for surgery, reform prior au-

thorization in the Medicare Advantage program, help ensure veterans' access to high-quality eye care, and increase vision research funding.

The event drew ophthalmologists from 39 states, plus Puerto Rico. They connected via teleconferences and Zoom for 132 scheduled meetings with senators, representatives, and their staff members. As part of the event, some Academy members had the opportunity to meet with congressional leaders, key committee members, and new members of the 117th Congress.

The event marked the second time the Academy held its Congressional Advocacy Day virtually. Academy staff scheduled all meetings, provided training, and issued materials to prepare participants for a successful call.

"This was my first congressional advocacy experience, and even though it was via Zoom, it was still an invaluable experience for me," said Samantha A. Sauerzopf, MD, an Academy Member



AMERICAN ACADEMY  
OF OPHTHALMOLOGY®

in Training serving as a sponsored Advocacy Ambassador from Pennsylvania. “The meetings were brief but poignant opportunities to get our issues across.” Dr. Sauerzopf met with staff in the offices of Rep. Daniel Meuser (R-Pa.), Sen. Robert Casey Jr. (D-Pa.), and Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.).

**Missed the meeting?** Head to [aao.org/volunteering](https://aao.org/volunteering) and click “Advocate” to learn how you can get involved.

## The Academy Launches Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Web Page

The Academy has committed to nurturing an inclusive ophthalmologist community that optimally meets the complex eye care needs of a diverse patient population. In keeping with that commitment, the Academy launched a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion section on its website in April.

This section has a wide range of resources for ophthalmologists, including information about two Academy task forces—one on the Academy’s organizational diversity and inclusion, the other focusing on disparities in eye care. It also contains information about the Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring program, resources for residents, relevant Academy articles, and links to diversity and inclusion education materials from the Academy and other valued medical resources.

**Learn more** at [aao.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion](https://aao.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion).

## Attend Eyecelerator on July 22

Eyecelerator, a partnership between the Academy and the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) that’s designed to accelerate innovation in ophthalmology, will hold its first in-person conference on July 22 in Las Vegas. The program runs 11:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. PST and will take place at the Oceanside BCD Ballroom at the Mandalay Bay Resort, a day before the ASCRS annual meeting begins. Attendees will be among the first to see new technology and clinical advancements while enjoying unique networking opportunities with ophthalmology’s most innovative entrepre-

neurs, clinicians, and investors.

The schedule includes the following:

- **Mini Keynote, by Chris Cooley, CFA.** A Stephens Inc. managing director offers a peek behind the investment banking curtain for a critical assessment of the challenges and opportunities in the ophthalmology and health care markets.
- **Industry Spotlight, Part I, moderated by Richard L. Lindstrom, MD.** In this session, a panel of global strategic executives will examine the impact of COVID-19 on ophthalmic companies and consider where they will focus resources in the coming years.
- **Ophthalmic Consolidation, moderated by Kerry Solomon, MD.** This session considers industry consolidation from a variety of viewpoints, including hospitals, private practice, and equity investments.
- **Presbyopia: Everybody Gets It but ... Can It Be Fixed?, moderated by John P. Berdahl, MD.** The competition to create pharmacologic treatments for presbyopia is heating up. This session offers a look at the companies innovating in one of the world’s largest ophthalmic markets.
- **Dry Eye: Satisfying the Itch for Innovation, moderated by Edward J. Holland, MD.** Dry eye represents one of the biggest unmet needs in eye care. In this session, hear from the innovative companies developing new treatments with a variety of MOAs.
- **Industry Spotlight, Part II, moderated by Cathleen McCabe, MD.** Industry executives of major ophthalmic companies will discuss how their businesses are preparing for the coming years.
- **Glaucoma Innovation: The Future Is Bright, moderated by Thomas Samuelson, MD.** In this session, take a look at the companies that are pioneering new treatments and bringing innovation into the specialty of glaucoma.

**Learn more** at [eyecelerator.com](https://eyecelerator.com).

## TAKE NOTICE

### Honor a Mentor

Who has made a positive impact on your life? A mentor? A family member or friend? A colleague?

This summer, you have the opportunity to honor your mentor or other special people with a tribute gift to the Foundation. You can share what this person means to you, and your story will be published on the Foundation’s website. Your gift will also be featured in the Foundation’s 2022 annual report.

**Get started** at [aao.org/foundation/honor-a-mentor](https://aao.org/foundation/honor-a-mentor).

## Volunteer: Write an EyeNet Ophthalmic Pearls Article

Want to be featured in *EyeNet*? Each 1,500-word Pearls article reviews a medical or surgical entity or procedure. Many of the articles offer step-by-step overviews of etiology, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up. See this month’s article, titled Diagnosis and Management of Macular Holes on page 32.

**Learn how to submit your topic idea** at [aao.org/volunteering](https://aao.org/volunteering), then choose “Write.” (*This is just one of many Academy volunteer opportunities.*)

## Volunteer: Submit Your Clinical Images to the Academy

Images convey more than words, especially in ophthalmology. Your classic and rare clinical images will help to build the Academy’s image library and may be used by other members and subscribers as well as in various publications, such as *Basic and Clinical Science Course* and *EyeNet*.

**Get started** at [aao.org/volunteering](https://aao.org/volunteering), then choose “Develop Interactive Content.” (*This is just one of many Academy volunteer opportunities.*)

## Visit the Academy at ASCRS, July 24–26

Heading to Las Vegas for ASCRS/ASOA 2021? Stop by the Academy booth, #2212, to see the latest clinical education, practice management, and patient education materials—or chat with Academy staff. You can also get demos of the Ophthalmic News & Education (ONE) Network and IRIS Registry, have your Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) and coding questions answered, pay your dues, and learn more about AAO 2021 in New Orleans.

## Academy and Others Working to Increase Global Payments for Postoperative Ophthalmology Services

The CMS Physician Fee Schedule increased the payment values for evaluation and management (E/M) service, but it only applied those increased values to the post-op visits in some select global codes like the maternity and ER codes. Ophthalmology is on the losing end—to the tune of over \$100+ million a year. Reversing this inequity is a top priority for the Academy, the American College of Surgeons, and the American Medical Association (AMA).

**Under the new schedule.** Ophthalmology global surgical codes have a number of E/M office visits included in the payment package. Because the adjustments in the 2021 Physician Fee Schedule do not apply to postoperative E/M visits included in the 10- and 90-day global surgical codes, ophthalmologists and surgeons in other specialties are not being paid fairly for this follow-up care.

CMS is not convinced that surgeons are providing all of the postoperative visits included in

the global surgical payment, and it uses this belief to justify its decision to not give surgical postoperative visits the E/M boost.

However, there is a process in place to reevaluate codes that CMS feels are misvalued. For example, based on the Academy's robust survey data on the global surgical service, CMS agreed with the AMA Specialty Society Relative Value Update Committee's (RUC) 2019 recommendation that cataract surgery reimbursement include payment for three post-op visits within the 90-day global period. Since CMS accepted the RUC's recommendations, ophthalmologists should receive the same payments as other physicians when they are providing the same level of service per patient.

**In the past.** When payments for new and established office visits were increased, CMS would usually adjust the global surgery bundled payments to account for the increased values for the

E/M portion of these codes. The current failure to adjust the global code payment is equivalent to paying some physicians less.

**Organized medicine is advocating for equitable pay.** The AMA and its RUC are recommending that CMS incorporate the revised office and outpatient E/M values in the global codes.

The Academy and the Surgical Care Coalition are leading strong advocacy efforts to maintain the relativity in the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule and gain fair payments for all surgeons.

The Academy has encouraged its champions in Congress to press CMS to apply the increased E/M payment values to the postoperative visits included in 10-day and 90-day global surgical codes.

The Academy is urging CMS to reconsider its current policy and to ensure that ophthalmologists are paid equitably for equivalent services. It will update members when the proposed rule comes out.

### OMIC Tip: Terminating Care for Financial Reasons

In 2020, some patients delayed care for fear of contracting COVID-19. The pandemic also caused financial stress that impacted both medical practices and their patients. Because of this, some patients may delay paying their medical bills.

In these situations, OMIC recommends the following three steps:

1. Ensure that acute conditions are stabilized, or that another ophthalmologist has agreed to take over care.
2. Send the patient the 30-day notice warning of termination if payment is not received.
3. Send the letter certified and by regular mail, as well, in case the patient is not home or refuses to

sign for the certified letter.

OMIC's risk management recommendations for terminating the physician-patient relationship ([omic.com/terminating-the-physician-patient-relationship](https://omic.com/terminating-the-physician-patient-relationship)) provide step-by-step instructions for you and your staff and sample letters to assist in the process.

*OMIC offers professional liability insurance exclusively to Academy members, their employees, and their practices.*

## ACADEMY RESOURCES

### New to IRIS Registry-EHR Integration? Don't Miss the Aug. 1 Deadline

Integrating your electronic health record (EHR) system with the IRIS

Registry is the least onerous way to report quality data for the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS). If you met the June 1 deadline to register for integration, you should now be working with the IRIS Registry vendor, FIGmd, on mapping your data to the registry.

**Aug. 1 is a key date.** To make sure that you can report 2021 MIPS quality data via IRIS Registry-EHR integration, you should complete the integration process by Aug. 1. Meeting this deadline requires that you are actively involved in the process and respond promptly to emails from FIGmd.

**The IRIS Registry is your one-stop shop for MIPS reporting.** You also can use the IRIS Registry to manually attest to promoting interoperability (PI)

measures and improvement activities.

Those practices that aren't able to report quality via IRIS Registry–EHR integration may manually enter data for quality measures.

**Free for members.** Why pay fees to your EHR vendor for MIPS reporting? The IRIS Registry is a free benefit for U.S. Academy members.

Learn more at [aao.org/iris-registry](http://aao.org/iris-registry).

## Got New Clinicians? Notify the IRIS Registry ASAP

How have you been reporting quality data for the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS)?

If you have been uploading data for MIPS quality measures from your electronic health record (EHR) system into the IRIS Registry, make sure that you are not leaving any clinicians out.

**New MIPS eligible clinicians in your practice?** Has a new clinician joined your practice or has an existing clinician become newly eligible for MIPS? If you are reporting MIPS via IRIS Registry–EHR integration, notify FIGmd, which is an IRIS Registry vendor, as soon as you can—and no later than Sept. 1. Make sure that you include the clinician's National Provider Identifier and, if the person is an ophthalmologist, his or her Academy member ID.

### How do you contact FIGmd?

For instructions on submitting a help desk ticket, you can visit [aao.org/iris-registry/user-guide/submit-help-desk-ticket](http://aao.org/iris-registry/user-guide/submit-help-desk-ticket).

## Use the IRIS Registry to Create an ABO-Approved Improvement Project

Is your electronic health record (EHR) system integrated with the IRIS Registry? If so, you can use data from your IRIS Registry dashboard to design an improvement project that can earn you credit for both American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) Continuing Certification and the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS). For the 2021 MIPS performance year, this project would count as a medium-weighted improvement activity.

**Submit your plan to the ABO no later than Aug. 31.** Using the IRIS Registry dashboard, select one or two quality measures in which to improve your performance. Then, set goals for those measures and submit your plan for achieving those goals to the American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO).

If the ABO approves your plan, implement it for 90–120 days. Use the IRIS Registry dashboard to track your progress and fine-tune your processes as needed. Once the project is complete, review its effectiveness and send a summary to the ABO.

Learn more at [aao.org/iris-registry/maintenance-of-certification](http://aao.org/iris-registry/maintenance-of-certification) and <https://abop.org/IRIS>.

## Now Available: Download the Free 2021 IRIS Registry Preparation Kit

The 2021 *IRIS Registry Preparation Kit* is a detailed user guide that supports you throughout the year as you use the IRIS Registry to optimize patient outcomes, report your performance on quality measures, and efficiently report Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) measures. The kit includes:

- updated roadmaps for small and large practices;
- tips to avoid common pitfalls;
- frequently asked questions; and
- quality measure benchmarking tables and specifications.

This valuable resource is available as a free downloadable PDF or for

purchase as a spiral notebook. Participation in the IRIS Registry is a free Academy member benefit.

**For information about the IRIS Registry and to download this resource,** visit [aao.org/iris-registry](http://aao.org/iris-registry).

## Don't Forget to Prioritize Your Mental Health

Even in the best of times, physicians can be at high risk for burnout, depres-

sive symptoms, mental health distress, and even suicide. The Academy offers wellness information and practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase their resiliency regardless of their personal situation.

Learn more about the Academy's wellness resources at [aao.org/wellness](http://aao.org/wellness).

## Attend a Free VKC Disease Education Webinar

Join *EyeNet* as it hosts a free webinar sponsored by Santen on July 20 at 5:00 p.m. PST.

Speakers will present topics to include the pathophysiology, epidemiology, and clinical presentation of vernal keratoconjunctivitis (VKC); the challenges in diagnosis, complications, and risk factors; and treatment approaches and impacts on patients' quality of life. This webinar is intended for all ophthalmologists.

Learn more at [aao.org/eyenet/corporate-webinars](http://aao.org/eyenet/corporate-webinars).

## MEMBERS AT LARGE

### KAEPS Honors Award Recipients at 2021 Spring Meeting

On May 7–8, the Kentucky Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons (KAEPS) held its annual spring meeting in Louisville and honored the following award recipients:

- **Advocate of the Year: Woodford Van Meter, MD.** This award is given to an ophthalmologist who has best promoted and defended the art and science of ophthalmology in the state of Kentucky.
- **Humanitarian of the Year: Marianne Cowley, MD.** This award is reserved for the recognition of an ophthalmologist who has made significant contributions to the welfare of others throughout her lifetime and who supports the practice of ophthalmology.
- **Ophthalmologist of the Year: Joern Soltau, MD.** This award is granted to an ophthalmologist who has made outstanding contributions to KAEPS and enhanced the profession of ophthalmology.

Learn more about KAEPS at [www.kyeyemds.org](http://www.kyeyemds.org).

