

Academy Notebook

NEWS • TIPS • RESOURCES

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Dr. Chew to Take the Helm at *Ophthalmology Science*

The Academy has selected Emily Y. Chew, MD, to become the first editor-in-chief of its new online open access journal, *Ophthalmology Science*. Dr. Chew will also be the first woman editor-in-chief in the *Ophthalmology* family. She is a medical retina specialist, with extensive experience in the design and implementation of clinical trials.

Ophthalmology Science will focus on publishing preclinical research, phase 1 and 2 clinical trials, laboratory-based work, ophthalmology informatics, and clinical science. Its inaugural issue will launch during the first quarter of 2021, and it will publish quarterly.

As editor-in-chief, Dr. Chew will oversee all journal activities, including the recruitment and management of editorial staff, the peer-review process, and the maintenance of overall quality of scientific content for publication.

Dr. Chew serves as the director of the Division of Epidemiology and Clinical Applications and the chief of the Clinical Trials Branch at the National Eye Institute. She is particularly passionate about phase 1 and 2 clinical trials, a major focus of the new journal. Dr. Chew has also served on the editorial boards of *Ophthalmology Retina*,



DR. CHEW: “The *Ophthalmology journals* have always been dedicated to the pursuit of medical excellence and groundbreaking science. Now, with the introduction of *Ophthalmology Science*, we can continue to deliver the latest clinical research with the rising demand for an online, open access platform. I’m excited to support a community of intelligent, driven researchers in this new role.”

Retina, and *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science*.

“Dr. Chew brings years of relevant experience to this new role in addition to a deep commitment to careful study design and meticulous investigation,” said Academy CEO David W. Parke II, MD. “She is a nationally respected leader and wonderful writer and editor. I’m confident that her passion, integrity, and commitment will help position *Ophthalmology Science* for success.”

OphthPAC Helps to Boost Physicians in Congress

On Nov. 3, at least two more OphthPAC-backed physician candidates

won seats in the new Congress—one that is likely to see health care among its high-priority issues when the next session starts on Jan. 3, 2021. U.S. Rep. Roger Marshall, MD, a Republican, won election to a U.S. Senate seat in Kansas. Ronny Jackson, MD, also a Republican, won an open U.S. House of Representatives seat in Texas.

They join 11 other physician members of Congress—10 in the House and one in the Senate—who had OphthPAC support and won reelection this year. There will be a total of at least 16 physician members in the 117th Congress.

The race for Iowa’s 2nd congressional House seat is too close to call at the time of print. OphthPAC is supporting Academy member and Iowa state senator Marianne J. Miller-Meeks, MD, who is the Republican nominee.

For more Congressional advocacy news, visit aao.org/ophthpac.

Keep Up With the Truhlsen-Marmor Museum of the Eye Virtual Events

On Oct. 22, the Academy’s Truhlsen-Marmor Museum of the Eye presented *Can You Believe Your Eyes?* at this year’s virtual Bay Area Science Festival. The free family-friendly program included a conversation with Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute Senior Scientist Preeti Verghese, PhD, about the brain’s connection with the eyes. It also presented educational experiments that viewers can easily do at home with a book and a toilet paper roll. And it offered a first look at the museum’s San Francisco space.



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SNEAK PEEK. The Truhlsen-Marmor Museum of the Eye's virtual program at the Bay Area Science Festival included a two-minute tour of the museum.

The Museum of the Eye is the world's only free, public museum dedicated to the science of sight. In accordance with COVID-19 public health recommendations, the museum's doors remain closed for now, but the Museum of the Eye is still sharing online resources for learning from home and hosting virtual events.

For the latest virtual events and museum information, visit aao.org/museum-of-the-eye.

For the latest updates on virtual events, visit aao.org/museum-events.

For resources for learning from home, head to aao.org/museum-research-resources.

Fall Council Meeting Highlights Academy's Diversity Efforts and More

At the Oct. 17 Virtual Fall Council Meeting, the agenda covered many topics, including the Academy's diversity efforts, COVID-19, and scope of practice.

Diversity and health care disparity. A panel of presenters spoke to more than 200 Academy Councilors and society leaders about Academy and Council member efforts to help bridge the diversity and health care disparity gaps in ophthalmology. One of the panelists, Clara Castillejo Becerra, MD, who is a successful 2018 graduate of the Academy Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring program, is now preparing



Dr. Castillejo Becerra.

to begin her ophthalmology residency at the Mayo Clinic in June 2021. "It really makes a difference for patients to see physicians who look like them and who can speak their language," Dr. Castillejo Becerra said. "I look forward to paying it forward and mentoring the next generation."

Panelists also discussed the recent implementation and goals of two new Academy task forces. One task force

will look at organizational diversity and the other will look at health care disparities. Councilors for the National Medical Association—Ophthalmology Section and the North American Neuro-Ophthalmology Society discussed efforts by their societies in both increasing organizational diversity and mitigating health care disparities.

From COVID-19 to scope of practice. Other topics discussed during the three-hour Fall Council Meeting included the impact that COVID-19 has had on ophthalmologists, ophthalmology, and the Academy as an organization; how learning platforms are changing for institutions and residents; the expanding role of telemedicine and its potential impact on future delivery of care; and current and future scope of practice efforts. A special thanks and appreciation were extended to the Academy Councilors who completed their terms, many of whom devoted six years to this important role.

Learn more about the Council. The Council has a critical role in presenting membership concerns to the Academy Board of Trustees. To see who represents your state society, subspecialty society, or specialized interest society on the Council, and to learn about Council activities, see the "Council roster" link at aao.org/council.

FOR THE RECORD

Participate in the Academy Election

The election for open positions on the Board of Trustees and voting on the proposed amendments to the Academy Bylaws began on Nov. 16 and closes on

Dec. 15 at noon EST. Election materials were sent to all voting Academy fellows and members. Be sure to vote.

Results of the elections will be posted on the Academy's website at aao.org/about/governance/elections.

Nominate a Colleague for the Laureate Award

Every year, ophthalmologists distinguish themselves and the profession by making exceptional scientific contributions toward preventing blindness and restoring sight worldwide. The Academy Board of Trustees will recognize 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 Feb. 1, 2021.

TAKE NOTICE

Kick Off Year-End Donations With Giving Tuesday

'Tis the season to be jolly and make your year-end charitable donations to causes that are important to you. Kick off the season on Giving Tuesday, Dec. 1, with a gift to an Academy program that inspires you. The Ophthalmic News and Education (ONE) Network, the Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring program, the Truhlsen-Marmor Museum of the Eye, and other programs rely on donor generosity to succeed. Your tax-deductible gift can be made in honor or memory of someone special.

Make your December gifts at aao.org/donate.

A Request From EyeNet

In the next month or two, some of you may be invited to participate in a magazine readership survey conducted by Kantar Media. If you are a fan of *EyeNet*, please participate. Being ranked among the most widely and thoroughly read ophthalmic publications enables the magazine to secure funding for projects that help you in the clinical realm and in your practice, like the MIPS manual.

Volunteer: Review Quality of Care Documents

Review draft versions of new or updated *Ophthalmic Technology Assessments* (OTAs) and/or *Preferred Practice Patterns* (PPPs) during the wide review phase. Academy staff will provide guidance for the process. You can expect to spend one or two hours on an OTA and three or four hours on a PPP.

Learn more at aao.org/volunteering, then choose “Review OTAs and PPPs.” (This is just one of many Academy volunteer opportunities.)

Ask the Ethicist: Inappropriate Fee-Splitting or Good Comanagement Contract?

Q: *A corporate LASIK provider approached me about managing postoperative care for referred patients. If I agree to participate, I will receive up to 30% of the total fee paid by the patient. On the LASIK company’s website, it states that this is a great way to make money on referrals, and the contract makes it seem like a legitimate, common practice. Is it actually fee splitting or a kickback? I’ve read the Comprehensive Guidelines for the Co-Management of Ophthalmic Postoperative Care and wonder if they apply in a formal contractual relationship like this.*

A: It is important to note that the *Comprehensive Guidelines for the Co-Management of Ophthalmic Postoperative Care* are just that—guidelines. They offer information on comanagement and transfers of care and provide guidance to assist ophthalmologists in the management of postoperative patients. They are not Academy policy; thus, the Academy would not speak out against the practice of comanagement or act against those who comanage unless patients’ best interests are imperiled.

State and federal governments investigate and act against routine, inappropriate comanagement practices that come to their attention. Comanagement arrangements, when not well-structured by knowledgeable individuals, have a high degree of regulatory risk. As noted in the guidelines, the Office of Inspector General “has expressed concern about comanagement based on economic considerations

rather than clinical appropriateness and has refused to provide safe harbor protections for such arrangements, preferring to review cases on an individual basis.”¹

While this practice might seem “common and legitimate,” it does not necessarily equate to an ethical and/or legally defensible arrangement. As in any area of your ophthalmology practice, it behooves you to follow the best practice guidelines developed by your peers. The Academy trusts that members put the best interests of their patients first while complying with both

regulatory matters and best practices.

Prior to engaging in any comanagement scenario, Academy members should review the pertinent rules of the Academy’s Code of Ethics, including:

- Rule 2. Informed Consent
- Rule 6. Pretreatment Assessment
- Rule 7. Delegation of Services
- Rule 8. Postoperative Care
- Rule 11. Commercial Relationships
- Rule 15. Conflict of Interest

Before entering any contractual relationship regarding the postoperative care of patients, you should consult with qualified legal counsel to ensure

D.C. REPORT

Your Action Is Critical

In its proposed 2021 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule rule, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that it is not making the changes to evaluation and management (E/M) coding requested by the Academy and other surgical specialties.

Because of the E/M policy changes scheduled to take effect in January 2021, ophthalmologists face a minimum 6% cut, and some subspecialties, including cataract, glaucoma, and retina, could see 9% to 10% cuts. These payment cuts will have devastating consequences for ophthalmology practices already struggling from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. They also have the potential to drastically reduce patients’ access to surgical care.

The Academy is extremely disappointed that CMS did not heed the surgical community’s warning about the devastating impact its E/M policy changes could have on patient surgeries.

Working with Congress to avoid cuts. To prevent drastic payment cuts for surgical services and preserve access to care for patients, Congress must act. The Surgical Care Coalition, which the Academy helped found with the American College of Surgeons, is ramping up efforts to pressure Congress to do the following:

- Pass legislation before the end of the year to stop the payment cuts related to CMS’ E/M policy changes. This would allow CMS to implement payment increases for E/M visits but avoid drastic payment cuts to other physician services that are required to offset the cost of the increased E/M payments.
- Require CMS to apply the increased E/M payment to 10- and 90-day global surgical postoperative visits as they have always done in the past.

These actions will ensure that Medicare patients continue to have the best access—and the best care—when and where they need it. Getting relief from these cuts is critical for the long-term recovery of ophthalmology practices to ensure they remain available to care for their communities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Take action now. Contact your lawmakers in Congress today. Use the Academy’s advocacy tool at www.voterve.net/AAO/campaigns/77955/respond to urge your representatives to preserve patient access to surgical care and stop drastic payment cuts for surgical services.

that your comanagement agreement with the LASIK provider is legally defensible and consistent with federal and state regulatory guidelines.

To read the guidelines, head to aao.org/ethics-detail/guidelines-comanagement-postoperative-care.

To read the Code of Ethics, visit aao.org/ethics-detail/code-of-ethics.

To submit a question, email ethics@aao.org.

¹ *Fed Regist.* 1999;64(223):63548-63549.

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Dr. Miller Receives the 2020 Clarkson Quality Improvement Award

The American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) selected **Ellen R. Miller, MD**, to receive the 2020 Clarkson Quality Improvement Award. Named for the ABO's Emeritus Executive Director, **John G. Clarkson, MD**, this annual award recognizes passion, innovation, and professionalism in quality improvement projects submitted for Continuing Certification.

In her project, *Using QI to Reduce Severe Retinopathy of Prematurity ROP in Infants in a Colorado NICU*, Dr. Miller worked to educate nurses and parents about factors that can contribute to ROP in at-risk premature infants and sought to reduce the number of severe cases requiring surgical intervention at the University of Colorado Memorial Hospital in Colorado Springs.

The award committee noted that Dr. Miller's project was a model for measuring and educating nursing staff, saving sight, and improving lives.

ACADEMY RESOURCES

Sign Up Now for the Annual Coding Update Webinar

With the change in E/M documentation requirements and 2021 allowables, practices must create a new strategy for submitting an E/M versus an Eye visit code. Sign up for the Academy's annual Ophthalmology Coding Update live webinar and learn how to appropriately maximize reimbursements. **David B. Glasser, MD**, and **Sue Vicchilli, COT, OCS, OCSR**, Academy director of cod-

ing and reimbursement, will detail the critical regulatory and reimbursement changes impacting ophthalmology in the new year. The live webinar takes place on Jan. 12, 2021, and a recording will be available Jan. 26.

Register today at store.aao.org/webinar-2021-ophthalmology-coding-update.html.

Order Your Updated 2021 Coding Books Today

The trusted Academy coding tools your practice uses every day have been revised with critical updates for 2021. The *2021 ICD-10-CM for Ophthalmology* manual is shipping now. In addition to the popular *Ophthalmic Coding Coach* and *Coding Assistant* series, you can also preorder essential Academy developed references for retina coding and CPT. Prepare now to avoid costly claim denials in the new year.

Visit aao.org/codingtools.

Get Up to Speed on MIPS Reporting for 2021

Each year, CMS adds new wrinkles to the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS).

Attend the Dec. 15 webinar. Find out about the changes for the 2021 MIPS performance year.

Free for Academy and AAOE members. For registration information, visit aao.org/meetings and click "Webinars."

Get 10% Off Patient Education Brochures Until Jan. 15

Don't leave patients self-diagnosing with "Dr. Google." Send them home with easy-to-understand, ophthalmologist-reviewed brochures from the Academy. These materials may also save you chair time and mitigate your risk.

Now through Jan. 15, get 10% off when you use code PEB2020. No minimum purchase is required to take advantage of this time-limited offer.

Order today by visiting aao.org/patientbrochures.

BCSC Self-Assessment: 3,000+ Questions

Sharpen your clinical knowledge and decision-making skills with 3,000+ high-yield questions while earning Self-

Assessment CME credits. The *BCSC Self-Assessment Program* is the only resource tied directly to the Academy's *Basic and Clinical Science Course*. Each answer provides excerpts from the *BCSC*, complete references, and a discussion of the correct answer. Use the new search function to easily search the entire library of questions by topic or keyword.

Subscribe today, visit aao.org/bcsc.

MEETING MATTERS

You Can Still Experience AAO 2020 Virtual

The live broadcast of AAO 2020 Virtual took place Nov. 13-15, but you can still view on-demand annual meeting content, all eight Subspecialty Day meetings, the Expo, and more. Even if you did not register for the live meeting, you can do so now—registration is open until Jan. 29, 2021. The virtual meeting platform is open through Feb. 15, 2021.

Learn more at aao.org/2020.

Claim CME for AAO 2020 Virtual by Dec. 15

AAO 2020 Virtual attendees can claim CME credits and obtain transcripts at aao.org/cme. Claim your 2020 credits by Dec. 15 and those credits will appear on your year-end transcript. The Academy transcript will not list individual course attendance, only overall credits claimed.

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

Plan to Attend AAO 2021

Mark your calendar for AAO 2021. It takes place from Nov. 13-16, 2021 (with Subspecialty Day meetings beginning on Friday, Nov. 12), at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans.

For details, visit aao.org/2021.

2021 Abstract Deadline Is Jan. 12

Want to create content for AAO 2021? Submit an Academy or AAOE instruction course or new Skills Transfer lab abstract between Dec. 10, 2020, and Jan. 12, 2021.

Learn more at aao.org/presentercentral.