

Academy Notebook

NEWS • TIPS • RESOURCES

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Academy Receives \$5 Million Gift to Establish VR Program

The Knights Templar Eye Foundation (KTEF) gifted \$5 million to the Academy—the largest gift ever made to the Foundation—to establish the KTEF Pediatric Ophthalmology Virtual Reality (VR) Simulation Program. This will be a first-of-its-kind educational initiative, offering free, cutting-edge simulation training to ophthalmologists worldwide. Users will need only a web browser and hardware, such as a VR headset, that is widely available to consumers.

The VR program will provide residents, trainees, and practicing ophthalmologists a simulated and safe learning environment that targets the youngest patients and diseases critical to pediatric eye care and pushes beyond the boundaries of two-dimensional spatial learning.

Through the program, the Academy plans to build both a virtual ecosystem and the first simulated ophthalmic patient encounters designed specifically for children's eye care, including but not limited to retinopathy of prematurity and strabismus surgery.

The platform will be robust enough to support these first groundbreaking



BENEFITS OF VR TRAINING. By first practicing skills in a virtual environment, residents and fellows will be better prepared to manage childhood eye diseases, reducing the risk of complications in patients and accelerating their competency from classroom to the clinic and operating room.

simulators and eventually patient encounters that span the spectrum of ophthalmology. The platform will benefit trainees across the globe, providing them with individualized learning paths that they can pursue on their own time.

Ophthalmologists Up for Reelection on Nov. 8

Two ophthalmologists—Sen. **Rand H. Paul**, MD (R-Ky.), and Rep. **Marianne J. Miller-Meeks**, MD (R-Iowa)—are up for reelection in the Nov. 8 federal elections.

Dr. Paul. First elected in 2010, Dr. Paul is running for his third term as a Kentucky senator. He has been a champion for ophthalmology, supporting Academy efforts to reduce prior authorization burdens, avert Medicare payment cuts, secure equity for the post-operative visits in the global surgical codes, and preserve ophthalmology's access to compounded/repackaged drugs.

Learn more about Dr. Paul at www.paul.senate.gov.

Dr. Miller-Meeks. Elected in 2020, Dr. Miller-Meeks is running for her second term as representative for Iowa's 2nd District. She has been a strong advocate for ophthalmology as a lead sponsor of legislation to improve step therapy protocols and strengthen patient protections. She also supported efforts to improve Medicare's 2022 payment rates for combined glaucoma-cataract surgery and supports efforts to prevent steep cuts to Medicare and reduce prior authorization burdens.

Learn more about Dr. Miller-Meeks at <https://millermeeks.house.gov>.

Academy Publications and Website Earn High Scores

Results are in from the Kantar 2022 Eyecare Syndicated Readership Study, the industry standard for independent, third-party readership data.



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Print publications. *Ophthalmology* journal and *EyeNet* ranked first and third, respectively, for total readers (percent of ophthalmologists who report reading the publication) and average issue readers (percent of ophthalmologists who read a given issue of the publication—weighted by frequency with which they read).

AAO.org. Kantar also reported that 79% of U.S. ophthalmologists surveyed visited AAO.org within the past six months, a larger share than any other ophthalmic site or publication. AAO.org also had the longest average session length in the past six months at almost 15 minutes.

Four Researchers Win IRIS Registry Research Grants

In August, Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB) and the Academy announced the recipients of the Award for IRIS Registry Research. Each awardee receives a grant to conduct population-based studies in ophthalmology and blindness prevention, using the IRIS Registry. The winners and their research projects are as follows:

- **Mary Elizabeth Hartnett, MD,** University of Utah Health, will study whether women in the United States bear a greater burden of blindness and vision loss, as well as other potential disparities in visual impairment;
- **Kyle Kovacs, MD,** Weill Cornell Medicine, will evaluate outcomes in patients who had secondary IOL placement to determine complication rates at more than three months after surgery;
- **Adrienne Scott, MD,** The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, will explore a possible protective effect of sickle cell trait in patients with both diabetic retinopathy and sickle cell disease; and
- **Victoria Tseng, MD, PhD,** David Geffen School of Medicine at University of California, Los Angeles, will investigate racial and ethnic differences in the incidence of neovascular glaucoma, treatment patterns, and visual outcome.

“We expect this research will reveal

new insights that will advance eye care, especially in patients from diverse backgrounds,” said Academy CEO Stephen D. McLeod. “We are pleased to partner again with RPB in this effort to promote big data research for the benefit of all patients.”

Four more grants will be awarded in 2023. The application process will open in November 2022.

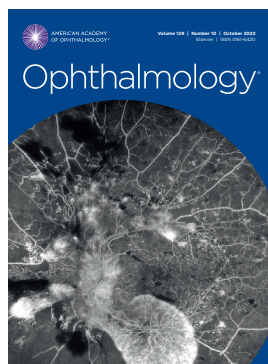
Learn more at aao.org/rpb-grants.

TAKE NOTICE

Submit an Article to *Ophthalmology Science's* Neuroprotection Issue

Ophthalmology Science, the Academy's Gold Open Access journal, will publish a special issue on neuroprotection. Submissions are open now through June 30, 2023. All open-access fees will be waived. The special issue will feature guest editors **Adriana Di Polo, PhD**, **Thomas V. Johnson III, MD**, **José-Alain Sahel, MD**, and **Joel S. Schuman, MD**.

Submit at www.editorialmanager.com/xops/default1.aspx.



Ophthalmology Publishes DEI Papers

Watch your mailbox for the October *Ophthalmology*. This issue features an editorial titled “Why Ophthalmologists Should Care About Disparities in Vision Health,” by **Tamara R. Fountain, MD, et al.**

This accompanies the Academy Task Force on Disparities in Eye Care's five Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) papers, which can be found online (aaojournal.org). In addition, five related commentaries will appear both online and in print.

Participate in the Academy Election

The election for open positions on the Board of Trustees and voting on the proposed amendment to the Code of Ethics begins on Oct. 3 and closes on Nov. 1 at noon EST. Election materials were mailed or emailed to all voting

Academy fellows and members. Results of the election will be posted on the Academy's website at aao.org/about/governance/elections by Nov. 5, 2022.

MIPS Alert! Don't Miss These October Deadlines

If you are participating in the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS), note two upcoming deadlines.

By Oct. 3, start your 90-day performance period. You must perform improvement activities and promoting interoperability measures for at least 90 consecutive days. (The performance period for quality measures and cost measures is the full calendar year.)

Reading this after Oct. 3? There are some improvement activities that your practice may have been performing and documenting as a matter of course. To review the improvement activities that are most relevant to ophthalmology, visit aao.org/medicare/improve-activities.

By Oct. 31, sign up to use the IRIS Registry for MIPS reporting via manual data entry. If you were signed up for IRIS Registry manual reporting in 2021 and are still in the same practice, there is no need to register again for 2022. Similarly, if you signed up to integrate your electronic health record (EHR) system with the IRIS Registry, you don't have to sign up separately for manual reporting. If you do need to sign up, you can learn about the application process at aao.org/iris-registry/application-process.

For more information about MIPS and the IRIS Registry, visit aao.org/medicare/mips and aao.org/iris-registry, respectively.

Volunteer: Write an *EyeNet* Ophthalmic Pearls Article

Want to write for *EyeNet*? Consider authoring an Ophthalmic Pearls article. 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 “Oculo-facial Diagnosis and Management of Benign Essential Blepharospasm” (page 31). *EyeNet* is also accepting Blink and

Morning Rounds submissions.

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

Ask the Ethicist: Operating on a Family Member

Q: *A colleague asked for advice about operating on a family member. His parents recently relocated to his metro area and have yet to develop a relationship with a local ophthalmologist. I am not confident counseling him. What are the ethical ramifications of him treating a family member?*

A: Regarding an ophthalmologist operating on a family member, the Academy Code of Ethics is silent on this issue since the Code focuses on the care provided to a patient rather than the identity of the patient. However, the question is certainly one to ponder with great care.

The AMA’s Code of Medical Ethics Opinion 1.2.1, Treating Self or Family, cites “several challenges for physicians, including concerns about professional objectivity, patient autonomy, and informed consent,” and later notes, “In general, physicians should not treat themselves or members of their own families . . .”

If your colleague decides to proceed, he should follow all normal procedures, including routine pre-, intra-, and post-operative procedures, diagnostic testing, proper documentation, informed consent, follow-up, and prompt referral in the postoperative period if anything looks amiss. During the informed consent conversation, he and the family member should have an honest discussion about what may happen to their relationship if there is an unexpected outcome. State licensing boards, surgical facilities, and risk management companies may have guidelines or prohibitions that should be explored prior to treatment. Last, reducing or waiving co-payments or deductibles for family members with Medicare and/or private health insurance plans is not allowed and is a violation of your contract. Medicare does not allow billing for services provided to family members by you, any of your associates, or your

D.C. REPORT

Academy Advocates for Reinstating Streamlined Approval Process for Ophthalmic Drugs

The Academy is urging legislators to reinstate the FDA’s longstanding approval process for most ophthalmic products. In a promising development at time of press, language which would do that was included in a must-pass FDA reauthorization.

Past process. For 40 years, the FDA regulated the dispensers of ophthalmic drugs (including eyedrop bottles), when packaged with the medication, as drugs.

Recent changes. In 2021, a federal appellate court decision—Genus Medical Technologies LLC v. U.S. FDA—required the FDA to modify its approval process, adding new requirements for drugmakers seeking to bring new treatments to market. Now a drug packaged in an eyedrop bottle, previously regulated as a drug, must be regulated as a combination product. This policy applies to currently approved and over-the-counter products, as well as those pending approval.

Academy concerns. Given the success of the regulatory framework for ophthalmic products prior to the court ruling, the Academy’s stance is that the overhaul is unnecessary and has significant downsides for innovation in ophthalmology. The new requirements could lead to delays in the availability of new treatments for patients. In addition, costs related to approvals could be pushed onto patients, increasing drug prices.

Advocacy efforts. Seeking to reverse the change, the Academy advocated for language from the Consistent Legal Evaluation and Regulation of Medical Products (CLEAR) Act that would restore the earlier, more streamlined process to be included in an FDA user-fee bill titled Food and Drug Safety and Landmark Advancement Act. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee advanced the user-fee legislation in June with the Academy’s requested language and fix.

At press time, Senate negotiations over the broader user-fee legislation stalled due to disagreements over other provisions. The Academy is working closely with congressional champions to keep this legislative language in the final package.

professional corporation (and commercial plans agree).

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

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

OMIC Tip: Comanagement of Surgical Patients

Some ophthalmologists share care of ophthalmic surgery patients with community optometrists or optometrists within their practice. There are patient safety and liability risks associated with surgical comanagement, whether it takes place within a practice or outside of it. OMIC’s risk management

recommendations in comanagement of surgical patients are based upon claims experience and incorporate the conditions for safe comanagement. These conditions are detailed in the position paper titled “Comprehensive Guidelines for the Comanagement of Ophthalmic Postoperative Care” (aao.org/ethics-detail/guidelines-comanagement-postoperative-care), which has been signed by more than 60 eye societies.

Learn more at omic.com/comanagement-of-surgical-patients.

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

ACADEMY RESOURCES

View the Academy's Wellness Symposium

At AAO 2022, the Academy presented a wellness symposium, titled "Physician Wellness: Tools to Take Home," and Academy members can now view the recording for free. Focusing on four modalities—work-life balance, mindfulness, yoga, and ergonomics—the symposium offers stress-management strategies that can be used daily.

View the recording of the session and access other wellness resources at aao.org/wellness.

Office-Based Oculoplastic Procedures Webinar: Mark Your Calendar

On Oct. 25, 8:30-10:00 p.m. ET, join moderator Mike Yen, MD, for a webinar titled "Office Space: Office-Based Oculoplastic Procedures That Make a Difference" (1.5 CME).

This Academy program, which is free to members, will cover topics including intense pulsed light for dry eye and blepharitis, periocular and facial lasers, office-based skin care for the eyelids and face, facial fillers and management of complications, chemical peels for rejuvenating the eyelids and face, office-based blepharoplasty, and periocular neurotoxins.

Learn more at aao.org/clinical-webinars.

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 Management 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 and covers 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.

Order Your Updated 2023 Coding Books Today

Accurately coded claims are more important than ever for avoiding costly denials. *2023 ICD-10-CM for Ophthalmology* is now shipping with more than 50 new updates/revisions that took effect Oct. 1. Preorder the essential *Ophthalmic Coding Coach*, *Fundamentals of Ophthalmic Coding*, the *Coding Assistant* series for subspecialties, and Academy-developed references for retina coding and CPT.

Learn more at aao.org/codingtools.

Conquer the Challenges of Tech Training

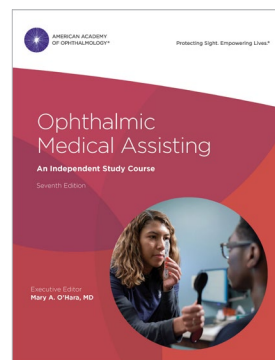
Increase the skill and confidence of your techs with the Academy's new edition of *Ophthalmic Medical Assisting: An Independent Study Course*, 7th edition.

Your new techs can shorten the learning curve and gain fundamental ophthalmic knowledge with these features:

- 45 step-by-step procedures,
- 26 training videos,
- 300+ photographs and illustrations, and
- 12 interactive models of the eye.

You can mix and match the print book, e-book, and exam for a discount.

Get started at aao.org/techs.



MEETING MATTERS

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 still 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 and Subspecialty Day Virtual—Saturday.

You will gain access to all recorded sessions for the Subspecialty Day meetings taking place on the same date.

In-person registration benefit. 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.

Plan to Attend AAO 2023

Mark your calendar for AAO 2023 in San Francisco! The meeting takes place Nov. 3-6 (with Subspecialty Day meetings beginning on Friday, Nov. 3), in Moscone Center.

For details, visit aao.org/2023.

2023 Abstract Deadlines

Want to create content for AAO 2023? Submit your ideas for an instruction course or new Skills Transfer lab. Abstracts will be accepted from Dec. 8, 2022, through Jan. 10, 2023.

To submit, visit aao.org/presenter-central.