

# Academy Notebook

NEWS • TIPS • RESOURCES

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### Dr. Garcia, Academy Past President, Dies at 92

George E. Garcia, MD, a former Academy President (1990), died Nov. 17, 2022, at the age of 92.

Dr. Garcia cofounded The Ophthalmic Associates, which later became Boston Eye Physicians and Surgeons. He served as associate chief of ophthalmology at Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, consulted for the Carroll Center for the Blind in Newton, Massachusetts, and maintained an active teaching presence at Boston University School of Medicine, where in 1989 he received the Alumni Award for Distinguished Service to his profession.



**DR. GARCIA.** Academy Past President passed away on Nov. 17, 2022, at the age of 92.

As an involved member of the Academy and a lifelong advocate for ophthalmology, he served on a half-dozen Academy committees. Past President and former Academy CEO David W. Parke II, MD, remembers Dr. Garcia: “George was



**INCOMING LDP CLASS.** Olena Hurzhii, MD, introduces herself during an orientation session welcoming the Academy's Leadership Development Program (LDP) XXIV, Class of 2023, during AAO 2022 in Chicago. Dr. Hurzhii was jointly nominated by the Ukrainian Ophthalmological Society and the European Society of Ophthalmology to be the Academy's LDP XXIV international participant. Together with 19 other ophthalmologists, she participated in an orientation session led by LDP Director Chris Albanis, MD.

first and foremost a gracious gentleman. As Past President of the Academy, he remained passionately interested in its activities and issues, particularly political and economic ones. He respected the responsibilities of leadership and always made it a point to support the current president. Of note, he was also the last of three consecutive Academy Presidents who received a degree in optometry before entering medical school.”

### Two Ophthalmologists Win Congressional Reelection

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

**Dr. Paul.** First elected in 2010, Dr. Paul secured his third term as a Kentucky senator. He has been a champion for ophthalmology, supporting Academy efforts to reduce prior authoriza-

tion burdens, avert Medicare payment cuts, secure equity for the postoperative visits in the global surgical codes, and preserve access to compounded/repackaged drugs.

Learn more about Dr. Paul at [www.paul.senate.gov](http://www.paul.senate.gov).

**Dr. Miller-Meeks.** First elected to represent Iowa in 2020, Dr. Miller-Meeks just started her second term in the U.S. House of Representatives. She has been a strong advocate for ophthalmology as a lead sponsor of legisla-

tion 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>.

## TAKE NOTICE

### Kantar Notice: A Request From EyeNet

Back in December, you may have received an email invitation to participate in a magazine readership survey conducted by Kantar. 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.



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## Volunteer: Clinical Currency Review

Would you like to help the Academy maintain its educational material? Sign up to do a clinical currency review. The Academy publishes a variety of books, online cases, and podcasts, which require periodic review for clinical currency. Volunteers must be an expert on the material's subject matter and have no financial relationships with industry.

**Get started** at [aao.org/volunteering](https://aao.org/volunteering), then choose "Review." (*This is just one of many Academy volunteer opportunities.*)

## Seeking Outstanding Ophthalmologists

Would you like to nominate a colleague for this year's Outstanding Humanitarian Service Award or Outstanding Advocate Award? Submit your nomination by April 3.

**The Outstanding Humanitarian Service Award**—which has been combined with the International Blindness Prevention Award since 2021—honors an Academy member who best illustrates commitment to community and charitable care in the United States or abroad. The Academy selects up to two recipients per year.

Visit [aao.org/about/awards/humanitarian](https://aao.org/about/awards/humanitarian) to learn more about the award or nomination process.

**The Outstanding Advocate Award** honors an Academy member who has demonstrated a pattern of advocating for the profession at the state and/or federal level over a period of at least several years.

Visit [aao.org/about/awards/advocate](https://aao.org/about/awards/advocate) to learn more about the award or nomination process.

## Ask the Ethicist: Commercial Disclosures

**Q:** *I recommended a new glaucoma medicine to a patient who then looked at my CMS Open Payments data. He saw a \$29 "food and beverage" payment from the glaucoma drug company from a sponsored seminar over a year ago. The patient claimed I was derelict in my duty to report a conflict of interest in recommending the drug. I don't*

*think one (bad) lunch buffet influenced my opinion. Also, the information I learned at the seminar was important for understanding the product fully, so that I could give the best advice and prescribe appropriately. Do I need to disclose every interaction I have with a manufacturer or drug company to every patient?*

**A:** The Academy Code of Ethics Principle 7 states that ophthalmologists must act in the best interest of the patient, and it is clear on commercial relationships and conflicts of interest:

- **Rule 11. Commercial Relationships.** An ophthalmologist's clinical judgment and practice must not be affected by economic interest in, commitment to, or benefit from professionally related commercial enterprises.

- **Rule 15. Conflict of Interest.** A conflict of interest exists when professional judgment concerning the well-being of the patient has a reasonable chance of being influenced by other interests of the provider. Disclosure of a conflict of interest is required in communications to patients, the public, and colleagues.

The question here becomes: Was this lunch "an economic interest" or benefit to you, and did the company's lunch have a reasonable chance of influencing your clinical decision-making? There are no hard-and-fast rules as to the economic threshold by which payments to physicians cross those boundaries, and so reasonable judgment must apply. Most disinterested observers would assume a million-dollar payment from a drug manufacturer to a physician would influence their decision-making, while most would also assume that a 25-cent payment might not. However, there is data suggesting that small gifts, like drug-branded prescription pads, significantly influence prescribing habits, as do visits from pharmaceutical representatives.

Given the ambiguity regarding conflict of interest, a safe course is to proactively offer patients a full disclosure of any gifts or payments you have received. Make your disclosures publicly available (perhaps as a link on the practice website). It is also possible to attend corporate educational events

while declining meals or gifts. (If you do so, be sure to let the company know you are declining so that you are not listed as a recipient.) If you have erroneous payments on the Open Payments website, follow the protocols for challenging and removing them.

**Learn more** at [aao.org/clinical-education/redmond-ethics-center](https://aao.org/clinical-education/redmond-ethics-center).

**To submit a question**, contact the Ethics Committee at [ethics@aao.org](mailto:ethics@aao.org).

## ACADEMY RESOURCES

### Register for 2023 Codequest Coding Courses

Join the most knowledgeable coding experts in ophthalmology for four hours of professional coding education vital to your success. They will map out the latest coding updates, review key competencies, test your knowledge, and steer you toward successful solutions for preventing claim denials. Developed by the Academy and hosted by ophthalmological state societies around the country, Codequest provides instruction for practices of every size and every specialty.

Visit [aao.org/codequest](https://aao.org/codequest) for details.

### Now Shipping: 2023 Coding Books

Protect your practice's reimbursements with the trusted tools that coding professionals use every day. Order your newly updated editions of *Ophthalmic Coding Coach*, *Fundamentals of Ophthalmic Coding*, and *Coding Assistant for Subspecialties*. You can also find the ICD-10, CPT coding, and Academy-developed references for retina coding.

**Save 10%** when you order four or more books today at [aao.org/codingtools](https://aao.org/codingtools).

### The Global EyeCare Volunteer Registry Is Open

More than one billion people worldwide are blind or visually impaired because they do not have access to eye care services, according to a *Lancet Global Health* report.<sup>1</sup> The Academy has relaunched its Global EyeCare Volunteer Registry, which helps connect organizations and volunteers. The new platform provides a directory of volun-

teers ready to serve and organizations with opportunities around the world. Add your volunteer opportunity. You can also volunteer by serving communities in need of your skills today.

**Learn more** at [eyecarevolunteer.aao.org](https://eyecarevolunteer.aao.org).

1 Bourne RRA et al. *Lancet Glob Health*. 2021; 9(2):e130-e143.

## MEETING MATTERS

### AAO 2023: Celebrate

AAO 2023 will take place in San Francisco, Friday Nov. 3-Monday Nov. 6, at the Moscone Center.

Gather with colleagues and ophthalmology's giants to share pearls and debate the merits of various techniques. Your registration includes the flexibility to attend all sessions and instruction courses, plus posters and videos. Get hands-on practice when you add a Skills Transfer lab. Don't miss the world's largest ophthalmic expo!

**Look for more news** in the coming months at [aao.org/2023](https://aao.org/2023).

### Be a Part of AAO 2023

Shape the world's most comprehensive ophthalmology meeting by submitting a paper/poster or video for AAO 2023.

Accepted scientific research will be accessible online during and after the meeting. In addition, there are presentation and discussion opportunities for specific posters and papers. The online abstract submitter will open March 9 and close April 11.

**Find more information** at [aao.org/presentercentral](https://aao.org/presentercentral).

### International Attendees May Need a Visa for AAO 2023

To attend AAO 2023 in San Francisco, international attendees will likely need a visitor visa. There are several steps to apply for a visa, so it is important to get started early.

To help you obtain travel documents, the Academy has created an online tool that will create a personalized letter of invitation. Enter your information into the form and print the letter or save it to your computer.

**Find the letter of invitation online tool** at [aao.org/visa](https://aao.org/visa).

## D.C. REPORT

# Attend Mid-Year Forum 2023

Mid-Year Forum, which is one of the Academy's most significant meetings, is held annually in Washington, D.C. It takes place April 19-22 and is an opportunity to directly advocate for your patients and profession, learn about health care policy changes impacting your practice, and develop strategies for implementing improvements to patient care. Join Academy leadership and hundreds of your colleagues in D.C.

**Congressional Advocacy Day.** As part of the Mid-Year Forum, Academy members will have an opportunity to meet face-to-face with lawmakers and their staff in Washington during Congressional Advocacy Day 2023 on April 20. The Academy will provide talking points during a dinner briefing on April 19. For more information and to register, visit [aao.org/cad](https://aao.org/cad).

**Pearls and practice management.** Beginning on the afternoon of April 20, the Mid-Year Forum will include sessions covering critical issues related to physician payment, prior authorization, audits, and documentation. Attend a special session to hear research proposals that aim to document and quantify cataract surgery. This is especially important because payment for cataract surgery is scheduled to be reevaluated in 2025.

Learn how to improve your patient care with sessions on practice trends, the evolution of cataract surgery, and cultural competency. You will also learn how to join your colleagues in leading global ophthalmology efforts.

**Academy Council meeting.** The final component of Mid-Year Forum—the Spring Council meeting—will commence the afternoon of April 21 and continue through the next day. Academy councilors representing state, subspecialty, and specialized interest societies will discuss issues facing the profession.

**Register.** Mid-Year Forum 2023 is open to all Academy members, and preregistration is available until April 2. The registration fee is \$225 through March 13. After that, it is \$325; the fee covers Mid-Year Forum materials and meals. Congressional Advocacy Day is included as a part of Mid-Year Forum, but there is also an option to register to participate only in Congressional Advocacy Day for free.

**Learn more and register** at [aao.org/myf](https://aao.org/myf).

### You Can Still Access AAO 2022 Virtual

Those who attended AAO 2022 in Chicago or purchased the virtual meeting can still view content online.

Go to [aao.org/myonlineproducts](https://aao.org/myonlineproducts), log in, and choose the virtual product for which you registered: AAO 2022 and/or Subspecialty Day.

You will be able to access AAO 2022 sessions on demand and claim CME credit (professional attendees only) through Aug. 1.

**Learn more** at [aao.org/virtual-meeting](https://aao.org/virtual-meeting).

### Claim AAO 2022 CME Through Aug. 1

Claim CME credits for attending the live AAO 2022 or Subspecialty Day meetings or viewing virtual sessions. You can split your claimed credit between 2022 and 2023, or claim it all in 2023. 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.

**Learn more** at [aao.org/annual-meeting/cme](https://aao.org/annual-meeting/cme).