

Academy Notebook

NEWS • TIPS • RESOURCES

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring Graduates Match Successfully

Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring program students have matched to 15 different programs across the country, including the W.K. Kellogg Eye Center, Duke University Eye Center, Jules Stein Eye Institute, and Howard Ophthalmology.

“The Minority Ophthalmology Mentoring program was crucial to my ultimate success in the match,” said Aaron C. Brown, MD, who was part of the Class of 2018. “I feel that those few short days at the Student Engagement Program started a snowball effect that continually enriched my academic life.” Dr. Brown matched at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai.

The program is a partnership between the Academy and the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology (AUPO). The goal is to increase diversity in ophthalmology by helping underrepresented in medicine (URIM) students become competitive ophthalmology residency applicants. Students receive mentorship, networking opportunities, and access to educational resources.

Learn more at aao.org/minority-mentoring.



MINORITY OPHTHALMOLOGY MENTORING PROGRAM. After participating in the Class of 2018, Dr. Brown (pictured with his wife and daughter, left) matched at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai and Matthew Martin, MD (right) matched at Kresge Eye Institute in Detroit.

Academy Publications and Website Earn High Scores

Results are in from the Kantar Media 2021 Eyecare Readership Study, the industry standard for independent, third-party readership data.

Print publications. *Ophthalmology* journal and *EyeNet* ranked first and second, respectively, for total readers (percent of ophthalmologists who report reading the publication) and average issue readers (percent of ophthalmologists who read any given issue).

EyeNet was top ranked for average page exposures (percent of ophthalmologists likely to see a page in an average issue of the publication). And among comprehensive ophthalmic trade publications, *EyeNet* has the highest percent of ophthalmologists who report reading the magazine both frequently and thoroughly.

AAO.org. Kantar Media also found that of 76 ophthalmic sites and publications, U.S. ophthalmologists are most likely to visit AAO.org first when look-

ing for 1) quality clinical content to use in practice, 2) information on drugs, devices, and professional services, and 3) timely and relevant professional news.

EyeWiki Contest: Read the Eight Winning Articles

EyeWiki is the Academy's collaborative online encyclopedia where physicians, patients, and the public can view content written by ophthalmologists covering the spectrum of eye disease, diagnosis, and treatment. Each year EyeWiki hosts two writing contests. One is for U.S. residents and fellows, and the other is for ophthalmologists outside the United States.

In July, winners of the 2021 International Ophthalmologists contest were announced.

- Sahil Agrawal, MBBS, MD, FICO, New Delhi: Imaging in Orbit and Oculoplasty
- Hélène Bailleul, MD, Caen, France: Cataract Surgery With Bag-In-the-Lens (BIL) Fixation Technique



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- Marianna Kavaliraki MD, MSc, Athens, Greece: Cherry-Red Spot
- Ana I.M. Miguel, MD, FEBO, PhD, Avranches, France: OCT-Angiography and Glaucoma

These authors won free access to selected Academy online products.

Earlier this year, winners of the 2020 U.S. Residents and Fellows contest were announced.

- Robin K. Kuriakose, MD, Loma Linda University Eye Institute: Incision Construction
- Jacquelyn Laplant, MD, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital: Carotid Cavernous Fistula
- Minh T. Nguyen, MD, University of Washington: Coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Karen M. Wai, MD, Massachusetts Eye and Ear: Medial Canthal Tendon Avulsion

These authors were invited to participate in the Academy's Advocacy Ambassador program in conjunction with Mid-Year Forum 2021.

Next contest deadlines. For a chance to win a trip to the Mid-Year Forum, U.S. residents and fellows must submit an article by Dec. 1, 2021. International ophthalmologists must submit an article by June 1, 2022, for a chance to win online Academy products.

To read the winning articles and submit to either contest, visit aao.org/eyewiki.

FOR THE RECORD

Life Achievement Honor Award Recipients

Individuals who have cumulatively earned 60 points and have made significant contributions to ophthalmology, as determined by the Academy's Awards Committee, were nominated to receive the Life Achievement Honor Award. This year's recipients are as follows:

Michael W. Brennan, MD
Pravin U. Dugel, MD
Robert S. Feder, MD
Judy E. Kim, MD
Scott R. Lambert, MD
James C. Tsai, MD, MBA

More online. See a list of Senior Achievement, Achievement, and Secretariat Award recipients posted with this article at aao.org/eyenet.

TAKE NOTICE

Submit Your Big Data & AI Studies to *Ophthalmology Science*

Ophthalmology Science, the Academy's open access journal, is pleased to announce the Big Data & AI Special Issue, which will provide a home for studies in this growing field. Guest edited by James D. Brandt, MD, Cecilia S. Lee, MD, and Aaron Y. Lee, MD, this edition will focus on articles related to new methods and results using Big Data or AI and will include editorials that highlight current challenges in the field of ophthalmology. Topics may include (but are not limited to) data sharing/standardization, privacy policy, and ethics. Open access fees will be waived for this special issue. The deadline for the first round of submissions is Dec. 31, 2021, with a potential publication date in 2022.

To learn more about the special issue or to submit, contact aaojournal@aao.org.

Urgent MIPS Notice—Get Started on Your 90-Day Performance Periods

Under the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS), you will be evaluated on up to four performance categories. Two of these—promoting interoperability and improvement activities—each have a performance period that must be at least 90 consecutive days and must be completed no later than Dec. 31, 2021. (For the other two performance categories—quality and cost—the performance period is the full calendar year.)

How to start. Visit aao.org/medicare for detailed descriptions of the promoting interoperability measures and the improvement activities that are most relevant to ophthalmology.

Don't delay. It's advisable to avoid waiting until the last moment (Oct. 3) to start performing improvement activities and promoting interoperability measures. An earlier start will provide you with leeway if you run into difficulty with your MIPS procedures.

After completing your performance period, you will be able to use the

IRIS Registry web portal to manually attest to your performance starting in January.

Get updated Academy resources. Download the *2021 IRIS Registry Preparation Kit* (aao.org/iris-registry) and *EyeNet's MIPS manual* (aao.org/eyenet/mips-manual-2021). These have both been updated to reflect CMS changes to quality benchmarks (see page 51).

What about COVID-19? For the latest information on the “extreme and uncontrollable” circumstances exception, you can visit aao.org/medicare/resources/MIPS-extreme-hardship-exceptions.

Volunteer Ophthalmologists Needed for EyeCare America

Did you know that you can give back to your community by doing the work you already do right in your office? EyeCare America makes it possible by matching volunteer ophthalmologists with eligible patients. It involves minimal time commitment but is very impactful.

“I'm on a limited income and Social Security,” said James “Pete” Hastert, an EyeCare America patient. “It was a true blessing to receive this service, and you all made it possible.”

Volunteers are matched with eligible patients through two programs.

- The Seniors Program volunteers provide a comprehensive medical eye exam to eligible seniors (age 65 or older) and care for up to one year for any condition diagnosed during the initial exam at no out-of-pocket cost for the ophthalmologist's services.
- Glaucoma Program volunteers are asked to provide a one-time glaucoma eye exam at no cost to eligible patients.

Volunteers for either program see an average of two to four patients a year.

Learn more at aao.org/eyecare-america. (This is just one of numerous Academy volunteer opportunities, which you can find at aao.org/volunteering.)

OMIC Tip: When a Patient Refuses Care, Document It

What happens when a patient refuses to follow through on your medical

recommendation? Often, the repercussions are minor. However, when the patient has a vision- or life-threatening condition, the consequences can be serious. Below are examples in which patients of OMIC-insured physicians refused care, came to harm, and sued their ophthalmologist:

- A patient called to report symptoms suggestive of endophthalmitis but refused to drive to a satellite office where the ophthalmologist was working that day.
- A patient who had recently had cataract surgery called the surgeon to complain of headaches unrelated to the surgery but would not agree to see her primary care physician.
- The parents of a child with retinoblastoma would not agree to surgery.

When a patient refuses to follow your recommendations, take the steps below to protect your patients and yourself:

Clarify and document why care is refused. Determine the reason for the patient's refusal. Ophthalmologists and staff are often frustrated when patients refuse recommendations, and they may make assumptions about the reasons. A simple approach can be very effective: "You're not willing to have the surgery? That is certainly your choice, but I would like to understand your decision. Can you tell me more about it?"

Educate the patient and obtain informed refusal. Although courts have recognized the patient's right to refuse treatment, they have consistently ruled that the decision must be an informed one.

Monitor ongoing and repeated noncompliance. OMIC claims data show that ophthalmologists do not always adequately warn patients of how noncompliance puts them at risk.

Duty to report neglect. Physicians have a duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect. This may be necessary if a parent refuses important care for his or her child.

Learn more in the 2013 *OMIC Digest* article, "High Cost of Refused Care," at omic.com/omic-digest-archives-2013.

Find informed refusal consent forms at omic.com/informed-refusal-forms

D.C. REPORT

Academy-Supported Bill Targets Prior Authorization Burdens

Prior authorization is delaying and disrupting the sight-saving care that ophthalmologists provide to patients. The requirements also can place unnecessary administrative burdens on practices. Reducing these prior authorization obstacles is a top Academy priority.

Prior authorization interferes with patient care. Aetna, for example, rolled out a policy on July 1 requiring preapproval for all cataract surgeries across all lines of business and sites of service—despite opposition from the Academy and the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS). That day, an Academy member said the policy already had delayed treatment for a patient who needed emergency cataract surgery due to a macula issue.

The Academy uses multiple avenues to oppose prior authorization. Along with ASCRS, the Academy has taken strong actions to get the policy rescinded: meeting with Aetna, communicating with the new administrator of CMS, launching full-scale grassroots and public relations efforts, and pursuing legislative solutions. The Aetna policy, which was still in place at time of press, is an example of the harm caused by lack of oversight and poor transparency into payers' use of prior authorization.

The 117th Congress reintroduces legislation. The Academy-led Regulatory Relief Coalition is making a strong push for reform by working with its congressional allies to reintroduce and advance prior authorization legislation in this Congress. Thanks to the coalition's efforts, the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act (HR 3173) was introduced in May by Reps. Suzan DelBene, D-Wash.; Ami Bera, MD, D-Calif.; Mike Kelly, R-Pa.; and Larry Bucshon, MD, R-Ind.

By July, HR 3173 had over 150 sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives and had been endorsed by more than 275 physician, patient, and other stakeholder organizations. With increasing bipartisan support, the coalition remains optimistic that the bill could become law during this Congress.

During a news conference in May with the House bill sponsors, George A. Williams, MD, Academy senior secretary for advocacy, said the prior authorization reform legislation would "provide greater transparency, oversight, and standardization on how Medicare Advantage plans are using prior authorization."

How you can help. Academy members can back these efforts by urging their federal representatives to support HR 3173 at aao.org/advocacy/action/vv.

[of-care-consent-form.](#)

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

ACADEMY RESOURCES

Webinar: Attend the Sept. 23 Academy/AAPOS Journal Club
Join moderator Donny W. Suh, MD, for the next Academy/American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and

Strabismus (AAPOS) journal club focusing on important pediatric studies recently published in the peer-reviewed literature.

Topics will include the reliability of telemedicine for real-time pediatric ophthalmology consultations, and the Wright hang-back recession with fibrin glue compared with standard fixed suture recession for the treatment of horizontal strabismus.

Dr. Suh will discuss these papers

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with Kenneth W. Wright, MD; Sudha Nallasamy, MD; and David G. Hunter, MD, on Sept. 23 from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. EST.

Register today at aao.org/clinical-webinars.

Wellness: Get Your Exercise Routine Back on Track

It can be easy to let a hectic schedule derail your exercise routine, and once you're out of the habit it's tough to get back on track. For help with initiating and maintaining an exercise regimen that fits into your daily schedule, visit this month's Academy wellness pages for tips and links.

For wellness information and resources, visit aao.org/wellness.

Meet Your Practice's Payer Requirements in the Exam Lane

Ultimate Documentation Compliance Training for Scribes and Technicians is a comprehensive on-demand course that will significantly improve your team's ability to document patient encounters correctly, satisfy payer requirements, and effectively shield your practice from audits and recoupments.

Learn more and sign up at aao.org/techtraining.

AAOE Webinar: Learn About the 2021 HIPAA Privacy Rule Changes

Do you want to learn more about the proposed changes to HIPAA's Privacy Rule? Don't miss this AAOE-sponsored town-hall style webinar on Sept. 28 at 2:00 p.m. EST. This live event, which is free to AAOE members, will be hosted by Eagles Associates President Jennifer Cosey and Academy Coding and Practice Management Executive Joy Woodke. They will explain the proposed changes, which include improved information sharing for care coordination and enhanced flexibilities for disclosures in emergency or threatening circumstances. Questions about the updates and their implementation will be presented to the panel for open discussion.

Learn more at aao.org/meetings and scroll down to select "Webinars."