

Academy Notebook

NEWS • TIPS • RESOURCES

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Coronavirus Resource: A Popular Resource

On Jan. 28, the Academy launched a coronavirus alert web page. Primarily intended for ophthalmologists, the page—updated frequently and covering statistics, the latest evidence, protocols for seeing patients, and links to resources—received almost 32,000 views within the first week. At press time two months later, aao.org/coronavirus had become a landing site for a series of subpages, which together had more than a million views. The successful launch of the well-used educational resource page can be attributed to its authors: **James Chodosh, MD, MPH**, with assistance from **Gary N. Holland, MD**, and **Steven Yeh, MD**.

Please note: In response to the pandemic, the aao.org/coronavirus pages are being updated rapidly, providing links for ophthalmologists, the public, and practice managers.

Watch the Iowa Primaries

Academy member and Iowa state senator **Mariannette J. Miller-Meeks, MD**, is running for Congress in Iowa's open 2nd District seat. As of press time, the Iowa primary is scheduled for June 2.

In 2008, 2010, and 2014, Dr. Miller-Meeks ran unsuccessfully against



RUNNING FOR CONGRESS. On her website (millermeeks2020.com), Dr. Miller-Meeks, who is running for a House seat from Iowa, introduces herself, talks about her stances on various issues, and shares press releases.

Rep. David Loebsack, the incumbent, who is retiring this year. She rebounded from those losses, winning a state senate seat in 2018 by running as an avowed advocate for patient-centered health care. She highlighted her background in eye care during discussions with voters in her district. She previously served as head of Iowa's state health department.

Dr. Miller-Meeks would provide an immediate, valuable medical perspective for health care issues facing Congress. As a leader in the Iowa state senate, she was instrumental in stopping legislation that would have expanded the optometric surgical scope.

She's not the only Academy member seeking a congressional seat in 2020. Academy Board Trustee-at-Large and Air Force Veteran **William S. Clifford, MD**, is running for Kansas' open 1st District seat in September. Visit Dr. Clifford's website (cliffordforcongress.com) for more on his campaign.

TAKE NOTICE

2020 MIPS: June 1 Deadline for EHR-Based Reporting

The IRIS Registry can streamline your reporting for the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) if you meet the deadlines.

Report quality measures using automated data extraction. The least burdensome way to report MIPS quality measures is by integrating your electronic health record (EHR) system with the IRIS Registry.

June 1 deadline for getting started with IRIS Registry-EHR integration. If you haven't yet integrated your EHR system with the IRIS Registry, you must sign up or—if you signed up last year but didn't integrate—notify the IRIS Registry staff by June 1 that you plan to integrate this year. You must complete the integration process by Aug. 1.

The IRIS Registry is a one-stop shop for MIPS reporting. You also can use



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the IRIS Registry web portal to manually attest to promoting interoperability (PI) measures and improvement activities, and—if you aren't able to report quality via IRIS Registry–EHR integration—manually enter data for quality measures. If you are new to the IRIS Registry, you will need to sign up for manual reporting by Oct. 31.

Review this year's improvement activities. Some improvement activities that were available for last year have been discontinued, but many more have been made available for reporting via the IRIS Registry. For detailed descriptions of each of those activities, visit aao.org/medicare/improvement-activities.

For more information on using the Academy's IRIS Registry for MIPS, go to aao.org/iris-registry/medicare-reporting.

Volunteer Opportunity: Become a Congressional Advocate

With health care in flux as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it is more important than ever for ophthalmologists to have relationships with their lawmakers to help educate them on how patients and practices are being impacted. Participate in the Academy's Congressional Advocacy Program and help to make sure that patients have timely access to care and that practices have relief from regulatory burdens such as prior authorization requirements. Help to ensure that practices also get immediate access to the financial assistance and other resources they need as Congress responds to this crisis.

Become an effective physician advocate. With assistance from the Academy, you'll develop relationships with lawmakers to represent the Academy's key priorities. As a Congressional Advocate, you will communicate with members of Congress and congressional staff. Join this national network of ophthalmologists, which has the power to influence Congress' actions to support patients and physician practices during this difficult time.

Get started. To sign up, visit aao.org/member-services/volunteer/advocate/be-congressional-advocate.

More on volunteering. Learn about dozens of Academy volunteering opportunities at aao.org/volunteering.

Follow @AAOjournal for the Latest Articles

Use Twitter to stay up to date on new research, including the latest on COVID-19, from *Ophthalmology*, *Ophthalmology Retina*, and *Ophthalmology Glaucoma*. Content is posted daily and includes articles in press, "Pictures & Perspectives," editorials, and new issue alerts.

Follow @AAOjournal at twitter.com/AAOjournal.

Interested in an Externship?

Are you interested in an externship opportunity with a leading refractive, cataract, cornea, or lens-based surgeon? The International Society of Refractive Surgery (ISRS) is now offering its members a chance to bolster their clinical knowledge in imaging technology, diagnostic devices, and various surgical platforms by learning alongside colleagues through the ISRS Externship Program.

These training opportunities are offered by leading ISRS members in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East, and they last between two weeks and three months. Stipends are available to help cover expenses such as airfare, transportation, lodging, and meals.

Atanas Y. Bogoev, MD, recently



ON LOCATION. H. Burkhard Dick, MD (left), with Dr. Bogoev (right), during his ISRS externship at the University Hospital in Bochum, Germany.

finished a one-month ISRS externship program in Germany. "I am extremely grateful to Prof. Burkhard Dick and ISRS for the opportunity to enhance both my clinical and theoretical knowledge in the field of ophthalmology," he said. Dr. Bogoev is an ophthalmology resident at the Vision Eye Clinic in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Learn more and apply at isrs.org/externships. Fall applications are open now and are due by Aug. 19.

List a Training Opportunity

The Academy's Global Directory of Training Opportunities is an online resource for ophthalmologists seeking a training experience outside their country, and it's the best way for institutions or practices to reach the broadest pool of candidates. If you have a fellowship or observership that accepts ophthalmologists outside your country, list your opportunities in this free directory—it only takes two or three minutes to post.

1. Visit aao.org/gdto-submission.
2. Click "Submit a Training Opportunity."
3. Log in (this step will save you time later).
4. Enter opportunity information.

For more information, visit aao.org/training-opportunities.

OMIC Tip: Leaving a Practice

Ophthalmologists leave practices for a variety of reasons, including illness, retirement, changes in employment status, and personal or family needs.

Before departure, the individual ophthalmologist and the practice need to take steps to promote continuity of care, prevent allegations of abandonment, and ensure that all involved ophthalmologists have access to the medical records in the event that the patient's care is ever called into question. At the same time, both parties must take into consideration the terms of their contracts and the requirements of state and federal law.

It's important to prepare your exit strategy early and make an effort to limit the likelihood of lawsuits. Download the "OMIC Leaving Practice Toolkit" PDF at omic.com/leaving-practice-toolkit to help with this often difficult transition.

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

MEMBERS AT LARGE

2020 Ellis Island Medal of Honor

Jim Mazzo, Academy Foundation Board Member and Global President of Ophthalmic Devices with Carl Zeiss Meditec, has been chosen to receive the 2020 Ellis Island Medal of Honor.

The Ellis Island Honors Society awards the medal to those who have shown an outstanding commitment to serving the United States professionally, culturally, or civically. Past Ellis Island Medalists include U.S. presidents and Nobel Prize winners.

2020 Migel Medal Winner

The Migel Medal, from the American Foundation for the Blind, honors professionals and volunteers whose dedication and achievements improve the lives of those who are blind or visually impaired. **Michael J. Schermer, MD**, is the 2020 recipient in the volunteer category.

Dr. Schermer has served the Sacramento Society for the Blind for four decades, established “A Party for the Senses” at the California State Fair for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, assisted in developing a division for blind runners in the Sacramento Marathon, helped raise \$45 million for construction of a new vision care center at the University of California at Davis, and has volunteered abroad through SEE International and the World Eye Foundation.

ACADEMY RESOURCES

Keep Up With Current Retina/Vitreous Practices

All seven Academy *Preferred Practice Pattern* guidelines (PPPs) for retinal/vitreous were recently updated, including “Age-Related Macular Degeneration” and “Retinal Vein Occlusions.” The PPPs are based on the best available scientific data as interpreted by panels of experts.

View all PPPs at aao.org/ppp.

D.C. REPORT

Academy Funds Efforts to Reverse E/M Reimbursement Change

The Academy has provided financial support to a sweeping effort by the country’s top surgical specialties to fight drastic cuts to surgery reimbursements scheduled to begin in January 2021.

Investing major funds into a cross-specialty campaign. The Academy Board of Trustees voted to commit several hundred thousand dollars to the effort to reverse the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ (CMS) plan. The campaign, led by the American College of Surgeons, targets lawmakers, regulators, and the public this year.

“The Academy and the American College of Surgeons have worked together since last summer to implement this program,” said Academy CEO David W. Parke II, MD. “Even during tough times with COVID-19 it is critical that we invest reserve funds to restore some of the cuts to surgical payments that will have massive impacts on our members. This sort of investment is what reserves are for.”

The Academy has already met with some federal agencies and lawmakers in Congress to persuade them that CMS’ proposed plans would be devastating to patients and to ophthalmologists. The Academy is pulling out all the stops to convince key lawmakers, including those on the Energy and Commerce, Finance, and Ways and Means committees, that the cuts will hurt surgical services, which ultimately will adversely affect their constituents.

Background. The Medicare physician payment system is budget-neutral, which means that as the value of some services increases or new services are added to the system, the values of other services are reduced. Unless CMS changes course, two future policies related to a boost in evaluation and management (E/M) payments will result in drastic payments cuts for surgical and specialty services starting in January 2021.

Free! Key AAOE Resources Open to All Academy Members

In these uncertain times, the American Academy of Ophthalmic Executives (AAOE), the Academy’s practice management affiliate, has made some of its membership benefits available to every Academy member for free through July 31.

One particularly valuable benefit is the Practice Management Resource Library (aao.org/aaoe-resources), which offers free access to a myriad of resources including online coding courses and new practice management webinars to assist practices dealing with the pandemic.

Explore the other newly opened resources at aao.org/practice-management/resources/coronavirus-resources.

Drive Your Practice Success With Benchmarking

The Academy/AAOE AcadeMetrics practice management benchmarking survey opened April 15 and closes July 31, so act quickly to benefit from this valuable tool.

Enter your 2019 practice management data by the deadline and use the AcadeMetrics benchmarking tool throughout the year to compare your financial data to that of similar practices. Get valuable insight into optimal staffing levels, number of satellite offices, and more.

Find out more about these free member tools at aao.org/practice-management/analytics.

Complete the benchmarking survey by July 31, 2020, to be eligible to win a \$200 gift card.