

Academy Notebook

NEWS • TIPS • RESOURCES

WHAT'S HAPPENING

■ The Orbital Gala: 10 Years of Fundraising Festivities

The Foundation of the Academy is celebrating its 10th year of raising funds to support the Academy's educational, quality of care research, and service programs via the Orbital Gala, held this year at the National World War II Museum. Eleven years ago, Alice Lea Tasman came up with the name "Orbital Gala" and sketched the original idea for the logo on a cocktail napkin with the help of her husband, William S. Tasman, MD, and Ronald E. Smith, MD. The first gala was in New Orleans in 2004, and the first silent auction was held in 2008 in Atlanta. Since then, the number of auction items has more than doubled, and bid sheets evolved to mobile bidding this year. Over the last decade, the gala has raised more than \$1.6 million toward furthering the Academy's mission.

The Tasmans said, "The Orbital Gala brings ophthalmology together as a community—not only on a philanthropic level but on a collegial one as well. We are gratified to support the Academy's mission to preserve sight through education, quality of care research, and its many worthwhile service programs. It has been an honor and a privilege to be part of the Foundation's team."

For more information, visit www.faaao.org.



FOUNDING CHAIRS. Dr. and Mrs. Tasman conclude 10 years as chairs of the Orbital Gala. "The Tasmans have been the heart and soul of the gala since its debut. Always the consummate hosts, they ensure that it is an elegant affair that is also great fun," said Academy past President **Ruth D. Williams, MD**.

TAKE NOTICE

■ Residents: Win a Trip to the Mid-Year Forum

EyeWiki is an online encyclopedia where ophthalmologists can read, write, and edit articles about eye disease and treatment. If you are a resident or fellow in training in the United States, write and upload an article by Dec. 1 for a chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to the Mid-Year Forum, held April 9-12, 2014, in Washington, D.C. Four winners will be chosen in early 2014 and recognized by Academy leaders at the Mid-Year Forum.

For details and to view past winning articles, visit www.aao.org/eyewiki.



■ Seeking Outstanding Ophthalmologists

Would you like to nominate a colleague for next year's Outstanding Humanitarian Service Award? The Academy must receive your nomination by March 14. The award recognizes Academy fellows and members for outstanding contributions to humanitarian efforts, such as participation in charitable activities, care of the indigent, and community service. It acknowledges those who have performed above and beyond the normal duties of an ophthalmologist.

To obtain a nomination form, e-mail member_services@aao.org or visit www.aao.org/member and select "Learn about and apply for awards."

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MEANINGFUL USE PENALTIES: The Academy advocates for exemptions.

ACADEMY STORE

■ Patient Education Handouts: Now in Spanish

All 83 patient handouts describing eye conditions and treatment are now available in Spanish. They are downloadable and can easily be customized by typing in your practice information; documenting the distribution of these materials to patients may help reduce medical malpractice risk. Access the most current versions through a subscription, which licenses handout use for up to five computers or five doctors in a practice.

To subscribe, visit www.aao.org/patienthandouts.

MEMBERS AT LARGE

■ WIO Awards Program

Women in Ophthalmology (WIO) has launched an expanded awards program as part of its goal to promote women in ophthalmology. WIO President Mildred M.G. Olivier, MD, said, "The expanded program features awards that address the different aspects of an individual's professional life, from scientific achievement to mentorship, providing another avenue for recognition of outstanding work."

The new awards include the Humanitarian Award, Mentorship Award, Educators Award, Emerging Leaders Award, Recognition of Service Award, and Scientific Contribution Award.

For details, visit www.wioonline.org and select "Awards" from the "About" drop-down menu.

■ Academy and State Societies Address Common Interests

In response to an Academy Secretariat for State Affairs recommendation, the Board of Trustees approved and provided financial support for a session on membership development for physician leaders and executive directors of state ophthalmology societies.

The session was held on Aug. 24 in Rosemont, Ill. Presenters included staff responsible for membership efforts in other national and state medical soci-

D.C. REPORT: Exemptions to Meaningful Use Penalties

Next year will be pivotal for physicians participating in the Medicare or Medicaid electronic health record (EHR) incentive program, as it is the last year for physicians to implement EHRs and meet the federal meaningful use requirements to avoid penalties beginning in 2015 (see page 7 of this month's supplement).

CMS-established exemptions. Physicians who are not eligible for one of the established exemptions must be using an EHR system that is certified to meet the new 2014 criteria. Even those who have been using an EHR and participating in meaningful use for years must update their systems. Physicians can request an exemption if they do not have high-speed

Internet, are in their first two years of practice, do not control the availability of EHR in their primary practice locations, or are the victims of unforeseen circumstances, such as natural disasters.

Upgrade deadline. Given the state of the EHR market and the growing pressures on physician practices, the Academy finds the CMS-established significant hardship exemptions inadequate. The federal government is requiring the upgrade to the 2014 criteria to ensure that physicians have EHR systems in place that allow them to meet the new requirements of Stage 2 meaningful use. However, the timeline to complete the upgrade will be challenging at best. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology reports that as of August, only 6 percent of EHR products had recertified to meet the 2104 specifications. As of July, 250,000 Medicare providers were participating in the Medicare EHR Incentive program, including nearly 7,000 ophthalmologists. Thousands of physicians are expected to enter the program next year in an effort to meet the penalty deadline.

The Academy pushes for a legislative compromise. To alleviate this pressure on ophthalmologists, the Academy worked with Rep. Diane Black (R-Tenn.) to introduce HR 1331, The Electronic Health Records Improvements Act. The bill would establish new exemptions for solo practitioners and older physicians who will be within five years of the Social Security early retirement age in 2015, since these practitioners face unique obstacles to adopting EHRs. The bill would also offer rebates to physicians who receive a penalty but go on to achieve meaningful use in the same year, thus restoring physician payments to the prepenalty rate. The Academy will continue to advocate for policies to protect ophthalmologists from unfair payment penalties.

To ask your representative to cosponsor HR 1331, visit www.capwiz.com/aao, select "Issues and Legislation," then "Electronic Health Records Improvement Act."

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eties. The planning team included Secretariat members as well as executive directors from state ophthalmology societies: Jennifer Keeler (Penn.), Todd Baker (Ohio), and Gordon Smith, Esq. (Maine). The breakout sessions allowed participants to share their stories, concerns, and potential solutions. Common themes were quickly evident.

"All medical societies are facing the same challenge: how to offer a value proposition that inspires people to join as members. There is no magic bullet, but we hope this session will provide an opportunity for inspired ideas and

cross-fertilization of best practices," said Academy President Paul Sternberg Jr., MD. "We would like to see state society membership percentages mirror those of the Academy so that we have the strongest voices possible at the local level," said Academy Secretary for State Affairs, Daniel J. Briceland, MD. "Dr. Sternberg and I encourage all ophthalmologists to be members of their state ophthalmology societies."

To contact your state ophthalmology society, visit www.aao.org/member, select "Related Organizations," then the "state ophthalmology society" link.