



President's Message ■

By Erin McCleary, O.D.

Happy Spring Colleagues!

I hope this newsletter finds you all enjoying a little more light in your days and a little less snow in your yards. The first quarter of the year is flashing by in our little world of organized optometry!

In mid-January, I was accompanied by Drs. Polezonis and Ferrentini and our ED Lynn Sedlak to (not-so-sunny) La Jolla, CA for the AOA's Presidents' Council. We met with our national delegation to discuss common concerns among affiliate states. Topics such as Membership Growth and Retention, Advocacy and Third Party issues were discussed in small break-out groups which encompass states that look very much like our own. Other sessions include topics such as how to develop effective leadership and communication, and opportunities to talk with the AOA Board about AOA initiatives and goals. As any Past-President will tell you, these meetings are one of the best parts of volunteering on the Executive Board. It is at these meetings, where you REALLY find out how much time, effort and care are put into supporting our profession at all levels. The connections we make with other colleagues throughout the country – those who are fighting the same battles we are here in CT – make you understand how very important it is to be active and involved in defining our profession, before someone else defines it for us. Also, this inside view hits home HOW MUCH ROI we are truly getting with our membership

dues. I would urge all of you to filter through the ranks so you can get a taste. Knowledge is so addictive!

Our 2020 CE Afternoon and Annual Business meeting closed out the month of January. Dr. Chris Quinn joined us and gave an AOA update. At the end of the evening, we were able to honor some very deserving colleagues with our annual awards; Congratulations to Drs. Irene Rosenberg, John Nedelcu, Mark Chasse, Laura Dake-Roche and Clint McLean!

February and March have seen a very busy legislative session. I won't re-hash everything here, as Linda Kowalski has prepared a thorough review. However, I WILL loudly thank all of those who have reached out to your legislators on our bill (HB 7173 Non-Covered Products) – especially those who rearranged your work/patient schedules so that you could be at the Capitol on March 18th for our breakfast with said legislators. I would like to make a special shout out to our 1st time attendees: Drs. Fabian Villacis, Kristen Taddie, Adam Kropf and Bridget Bortz. The connections we made are imperative to any potential success with our bill. We aren't done. Plan on being contacted again – the ask (whether time or financial) is always around the corner. Your commitment to educating your legislators is KEY to supporting your livelihood. We look forward to seeing more new faces at future events.

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CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS

35 Cold Spring Road
Suite 211
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Phone: 860.529.1900

Fax: 860.529.4411

Email: info@cteyes.org

Web: www.cteyes.org

Connecticut Association of Optometrists

35 Cold Spring Road
Suite 211

Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Tel: 860-529-1900

Fax: 860-529-4411

www.cteyes.org

E-mail: info@cteyes.org

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Managed Care Report ■

New Year. New Landscape for Optometry 2019

By Laura Carabello, Principal, CPR Strategic Marketing and Communications



A busy new year is already underway...with some troubling patterns evolving among the payers.

Dr. Chris Agro and Dr. Ed Pinn join me in welcoming Dr. John

Nedelcu nedelcu@icloud.com to our Third Party Committee.

ANTHEM CT Blue Cross Blue Shield

During our recent annual meeting with the plan, we clarified that the State of CT Routine Benefits are every other year. The HEP program is designated on Member ID card with a plan prefix....this doesn't appear on the web site and must be verified through customer service. Their Web is not yet updated. We shared that sometimes it takes an extraordinary amount of time for the offices to verify the info. They say that they are seeking to provide reliable, current info and it's not possible on the Web.

EyeMed continues to control Anthem Vision and Dr. Hom controls the program and relationship. Hom is advocating for ODs to be involved in management of pre-diabetes patients and is suggesting that ODs can get "limited" Medicare reimbursement for participating in Novo Nordisk Trained Lifestyle Group. Visit this link for information on participating in the training: Novo Nordisk National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP); diabetesadvocacyalliance.org

If there are issues with EyeMed participation, Anthem suggests working with Hom on a case-by-case basis. The medical panel for Anthem is still open for participation. Let us know if you have issues.

Prokera Issue: We were advised that CT optometrists are being denied reimburse-

ment on the Medicare Advantage plan,, although reports are that Anthem Mass. reimburses. Denials are becoming a national issue, with the plan now saying it is "experimental," although Medicare and other commercial plans are reimbursing. Further, we recently learned that UH Medicare Advantage is denying the claims on the same grounds. We are resending the EOBs from a CT office based on OD scope of practice. We are also connecting with the manufacturer to see if there is something "going on" that we are not aware of. FYI: Anthem/OPTUM Medicare Advantage ~ ProHealth provides the PCP provider panel

With this issue and when we have a question on policy or want to file an appeal, we need to document and verify that it is within the scope of practice. Our contacts at Anthem said they will help us. Otherwise, each OD needs to get a waiver from the patient regarding their financial responsibility and determine whether they are willing to pay for the service.

Some administrative issues worth noting:

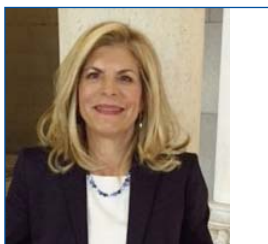
Card Prefixes will help offices to determine the PLAN TYPE, although this can be verified on the Website under the headings COMMUNICATIONS or PUBLICATIONS.

Discussed the importance of electronic claim filing vs. paper-based transactions which are often illegible and do not line up for scanning. Go electronic - Availity is the Anthem claims clearinghouse and note that attachments are now accepted.

They will be updating the fee schedules - hopefully - this year.

EPIC is the universal Electronic Health Record system to ensure interoperability between providers and payers - although ODs do not have this system in place and utilize other platforms.

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Legislative Report ■

CAO's Priority Bill Advances From Committee

By Linda Kowalski, The Kowalski Group

CAO's priority bill this year, House Bill 7173, *An Act Concerning Contracts Between Health Insurers and Optometrists*, was advanced recently by the Insurance and Real Estate committee. We received a unanimous vote in support of the bill at the committee's March 14 meeting!

A little background on this: four years ago, the General Assembly enacted Public Act 15-122, which stated clearly that an insurer cannot regulate optometric services or procedures unless they cover them in the policy and make some level of reimbursement to the licensed Optometrist. (Dentists were previously afforded these same protections in statute.)

The law was prompted by the fact that a number of insurers were directing members of the Optometric profession to steeply discount their pricing on eyewear (glasses and contact lens among other items) even though the insurer did not cover the service or procedure or reimburse for some of the cost.

We anticipated that PA 15-122 would end the issue. However, some insurers are deeming eyewear to not be a "service" or "procedure". House Bill 7173 updates the law by adding the word "products" to the prohibited action. We believe this will capture glasses and/or contact lens in these patient protections. As we have told legislators, the discounts insurers mandate distort the marketplace. Patients who are not enrolled in those insurance plans pay higher prices as a result. During testimony, in support of the bill to the Insurance and Real Estate committee, Brian Lynch, O.D., was asked point-blank if this bill was a consumer protection. He said "Yes!" and the committee later agreed.

An amendment was made to the bill in committee to give Ophthalmology the same protections, something CAO supported.

Finally, there are four steps to the process: Getting the bill advanced from committee, getting it passed by the House, getting it through the Senate, and then, finally, having Governor Ned Lamont sign it into law. We are over the first hurdle!

High-Deductible Plans

CAO has been active at the State Capitol trying to reform the high-deductible insurance plan laws. Recently, Chris Agro, O.D., testified in support of Senate Bill 28, which would shift responsibility for collecting patient deductibles and co-pays to the insurer. CAO's comments included a discussion that when a patient does access care, their provider bills the insurance company who then denies payment because their deductible hasn't been met. The provider now must pursue the patient for the payment for services provided. This bill would shift the responsibility of collecting the fees for service back to the insurer. We believe that they, the insurance company, collected the premiums, they contracted with the patient, and they denied coverage. The provider simply cared for the patient, and now has to wait to get paid.

Many thanks to Brian Lynch, O.D. and Chris Agro, O.D., for their great work in testifying on legislation!

Protecting Medicaid

A CAO priority this session has also been to protect your role in the Medicaid program as well as to protect and provide vision care services for low-income beneficiaries of the program. So far, we have succeeded with that objective. There were cuts proposed in the budget that Governor Lamont submitted to the General Assembly in late February; however, we worked to ensure that vision care services were not affected. As the budget debate continues, we all need to remember the state is facing a potential \$1 billion deficit in the next year or two. Items that are not on a list to be cut could suddenly appear as vulnerable. So, again, we may need ODs to contact their legislators in support of Medicaid funding if vision care services appear in jeopardy.

Opposing Bills That Interfere with Optometry

In addition to promoting proactive legislation such as our non-covered services bill, CAO has been successful in helping to prevent legislation that

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Erin McCleary, OD; Senator Henri Martin, Gary Maglio, OD and Michelle Moore OD



Jerry Hardison, OD; Senator Derek Slap, and Laura Dake-Roche, OD



Representative Tom Amone and CAO members Bridget Bortz, OD and Chris Agro, OD



Representative Leslie Zupkus and Patty Youngquist, OD



Representative D'Agostino speaks with CAO Legislative Chair Brian Lynch, OD and CAO Lobbyist Linda Kowalski



Representative Chris Davis and Bob Palozej, OD

Legislative Report (continued from page 3)

would interfere with your ability to practice to your qualifications and expertise from going forward. For several years now, a proposal has been made to define surgery in statute. CAO has opposed this as it could interfere with your ability to remove foreign bodies from an eye. We have also opposed a so-called “truth in advertising” proposal that could encroach on Optometry’s scope of practice by denigrating the board certification process. We continue to lobby against both concepts and, at this writing, believe both proposals are dead. But, again, we are constantly monitoring the situation because one or both of the concepts could appear as an amendment to other legislation later in the process.

Governor’s Revenue Bill

Governor Ned Lamont’s tax proposal has been introduced as Senate Bill 877, An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor’s Budget. The governor’s proposal to modernize the sales tax includes an unprecedented number of changes to the levy either through adding items to the tax or eliminating current exemptions to raise an additional \$351 million in fiscal 2020 and \$652 million in fiscal 2021, for a total increase of \$1.02 billion during the next biennium. Virtually every segment of the business sector was hit—the sales tax would now apply to legal, accounting, interior design, real estate, barbers, beauty salons and parking, to cite a

few. Non-prescriptions medicines and vitamins would be taxed as well as newspapers and magazines, and the trade-in value of an automobile. We can report that the Governor did not propose a medical provider tax, something that has “been on the table” at the State Capitol for a number of years.

New Legislators

Five special elections were held on February 26, with Republicans flipping two seats from Democratic to Republican control. Democrats retained control of the 3rd and 5th Senate district with wins by Dr. M. Saud Anwar and Derek Slap, respectively; while Republican Gennaro Bizzarro won in the 6th Senate district which is anchored by New Britain. Democrat Anthony Nolan won the 39th House district in New London while Joseph Zullo, Republican, won the 99th House district in East Haven. Democrats now control the Senate by a margin of 22-14 and the House by a margin of 91-60.

Finally, many thanks to all of the CAO members who attended the CAO Legislative Breakfast on March 18 in Hartford. We were pleased with the turnout of legislators, legislative staff and CAO members. We were able to discuss our issues, primarily House Bill 7173, with legislators who took the time to attend, listen and speak to us.



Representative William Petit meets with CAO members



Representative Robin Comey and Brian Lynch, OD

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Managed Care (continued from page 2)

They do not foresee expansion with Minute Clinics offering vision care services.

We again raised the issue of including the eye exam as a yearly benefit, and discussed relieving patients from co-pay for DREs as a way to improve compliance and HEDIS scores.

Anthem contact offered to have CAO included in the upcoming summer meeting of its Payment Innovation Team. All of the above will be discussed.

ConnectiCare

Some of our discussion points:

- Electroretinographs (ERG): CTCare and CTCare Medicare have different policies regarding preauthorization.
- Special Needs Plans (SNPs): Just introduced 1.1.2019 for dual eligibles on Medicare and Medicaid. There is a training program required and one provider from each group that is participating is required to complete the module and then train colleagues in the group. A non-doctor can complete the training. Any questions regarding this, email: info.primehealth@atlassystems.com
- Provider Directory: all changes should be handled online at <https://www.connecticare.com/provider/commercial.aspx>
- Authorization for CPT92145 Corneal Hysteresis: Commercial ~ call 1.800.562.6833; Medicare – call 1.800.508.6157.
- Fee Schedule will undergo a review mid-year 2020.
- CT Exchange: CT Care has captured 75% market share
- Sanitas/Hispanic primary care has had slower than expected utilization; CT Care is a joint owner in the clinic.
- Emblem Health Plan (NY), CT Care parent company, is participating in network sharing integration; ODs can expect to see patients with the Emblem Health Plan card.
- CT Care is doing some direct contracting with employers and self-funded plans, utilizing a narrow network.
- 92015 – reimbursement issues solved and no more rejections.
- CT Care has relationships with PROHEALTH and HARTFORD HEALTHCARE
- CT Care likes the idea of eliminating the co-pay for the DRE but she needs to check with her boss.

ECHN – Eastern Connecticut Health Network via Anthem Hartford Healthcare with Aetna

Both are requiring patients to see a hospital system network doctor, i.e., OMD, for medical eye care. Since there are virtually no ODs on these panels or ODs employed by MDs who are on the panel, the bottom line is that independent ODs are getting shut out.

We have not received a response from Aetna, but here is the troubling response from Anthem when we queried:

Q to Anthem: We just learned that Anthem contracts with the Eastern Connecticut Health Network which is requiring patients to see a hospital system network doctor, i.e., OMD, for medical eye care. Since there are virtually no ODs on this panel or ODs employed by MDs who are on the panel this appears to be highly discriminatory practice.

RESPONSE:

ACO/PHO entities are encouraged to manage the entire continuum of care for their attributed Anthem patients. This includes utilizing other providers within a given system when appropriate. If a system does not include a particular provider specialty, then they can of course refer patients to those providers outside of the ACO/PHO system. There is nothing in place that would discriminate against ODs.

UHC

We received these issues from members and are getting them resolved:

"I completed credentialing with UHC this past spring/summer. I ran into issues with the contracts not being completed. Johnnie Jones did not respond to my emails and his voice mail was always full and I could not leave a message."

"The end game MAY be in sight: We found out that UHC had me listed twice in their database, under SS and TIN. The rep guessed that when some "new" contract came out this happened. Anyway they tried to send me a NEW contract that included Medicare Advantage too (wasn't I in it before, yes). Electronic signing via Docusign didn't work twice. Then they cancelled the contract. After squawking by me they sent a paper contract (2 copies). I returned by certified mail and they got them shortly thereafter, but no response. So I called the rep again and it was loaded into their system to be effective on Feb 22."

Additionally, our members sent us this UHC communications and are concerned that ODs are not included for after hours reimbursement:

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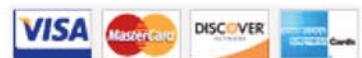


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Managed Care (continued from page 7)

It states: "CPT Codes 99050 and 99051. Although CMS considers CPT codes 99050 and 99051 to be bundled into the payment for other services provided on the same day, United Healthcare will provide additional compensation to participating primary care providers for seeing patients in situations that would otherwise require more costly urgent care or emergency room settings by reimbursing CPT code 99050 in addition to basic services and CPT code 99051 in addition to acute care services (not preventive medicine codes).

It goes on to state: "United Healthcare will reimburse the following participating primary care providers for CPT codes 99050 and 99051:

- Adolescent Medicine, Pediatric-Adolescent, Pediatrics
- Family Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Practitioner, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Advanced Registered
- Nurse Practitioner
- Family Practice
- General Practice
- Geriatric Medicine
- Gynecology, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Obstetrics
- Internal Medicine
- Certified Nurse Midwife

We pointed out to our contact that optometrists are called in after hours for a foreign body removal, corneal abrasion or symptoms of a retinal detachment to name a few things that would otherwise end up in the emergency room. Here is the link to the complete policy:

<https://www.uhcprovider.com/content/dam/provider/docs/public/policies/comm-reimbursement/COMM-After-Hours-Weekend-Care-Policy.pdf>

Here is the response we received:

"Optometrists are specialists, not PCPs and therefore not included."

We are drafting a formal request that Optometrists are included in this program.

AETNA

Back in November 2018, we had a conference call with Aetna leadership team. We finally received their notes summarizing the topics discussed:

Closed/Open Panels

Conversations lead to closed/open panels and how these panels are decided upon. How is the Aetna Select Plan panel different from EyeMed Panel and why some providers are excluded and others are not? Need better understanding of Network Adequacy.

- They clarified that EyeMed has multiple provider network panels. Aetna uses EyeMed's Aetna Select panel.

Clarity with providers joining EyeMed network but only choosing to join Aetna panel

- Providers can join EyeMed for Aetna only.

Providers that have multiple offices and can get on the panel in one office but not another:

- Upon receipt of the application, EyeMed researches their system to identify associations with existing practices. EyeMed accommodates adding additional locations for providers who apply to join the Aetna Vision network. If for any reason, this association is not identified by EyeMed at the time of application, please provide examples so we can research for you.
- CT Association of Optometrist to provide specific examples

Our liaison asked the attendees to provide her with specifics so that she can treat each incident on a case by case basis. She will partner with colleagues to collect the information related to the complaints and research to come up w/solutions and the goal is to come up with a workflow internally and externally.

- They indicate that multiple specialties beyond Optometry/ophthalmology are closed for all new contracting in CT because of network capacity.

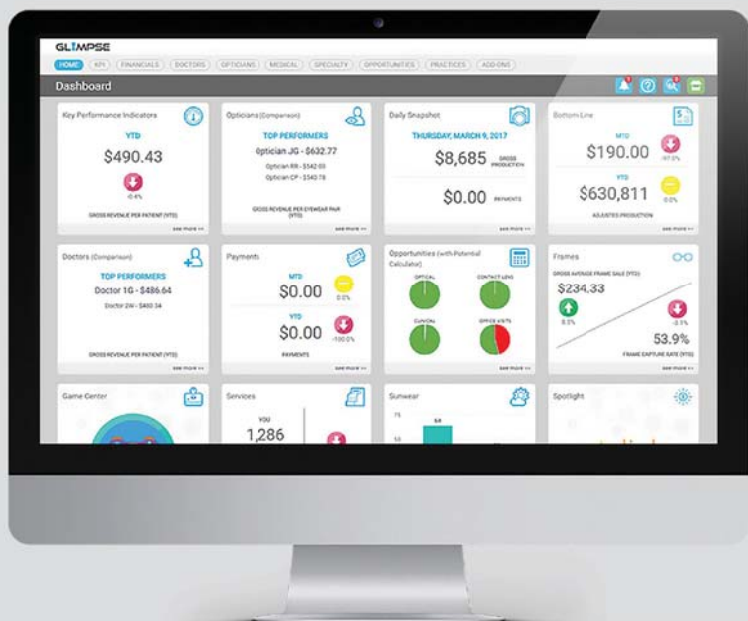
Can providers drop other plans with EyeMed and stay on for Aetna with EyeMed?

Yes. Providers can drop other plans with EyeMed and stay par with EyeMed for only Aetna.

More recently, we received this inquiry from a member:

We recently got a partial denial on a claim from Aetna on a Fundus Photo claiming that "CPT 92250 deemed experimental by payer." The diagnosis code used was H44.2E3 Degenerative myopia with other maculopathy bilateral which seems to be an acceptable supporting diagnosis according to our Eyecor program. The fundus photo was

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Managed Care (continued from page 9)

billed along with an Established Patient Comprehensive Exam (92014) and Refraction (92015), both of which were paid by Aetna. Please let me know what other information you need.

Responded to Aetna, including the EOB. This involves Aetna's allowed code set for fundus photography. Eyecor, the company that lets providers know what testing can be billed with a particular diagnosis, may not take into account Aetna's own diagnosis code set. We received a note from our contact that they reprocessed the claim – and the practice is getting paid! Good news.

Convening an “Army” of CT Ods to Deliver the Message:

We are going to be raising awareness and communicating the value of optometry to self-funded companies, unions and others in CT.

Here's why: some members have told us that some companies and self-funded groups and unions in CT are defining their vision care benefits to only allow MD ophthalmologists to deliver the service. They use Anthem or other plans for Administrative Services Only ~ access the network as needed and process claims.

In response, our Third Party committee is asking members throughout the state to join us in contacting local companies in their area. We will be providing a short powerpoint presentation and empowering our members with the tools they need to reach out.

IT ONLY REQUIRES A FEW HOURS OF TIME OVER THE NEXT YEAR!

And remember: if you need to question any discrimination against ODs providing services for Taft-Harley/unions/self-funded groups, please be prepared to provide specific examples, including EOBs.

Welcome New Members!

Please join us in welcoming our newest CAO members:

David Folman, OD is a 2018 graduate of the New England College of Optometry. Dr. Folman is currently practicing for Dr. Martin D. Arkin, PC in Norwalk.

Katrina Hrubiec, OD is a 2017 graduate of the MCPHS University College of Optometry. Dr. Hrubiec is currently practicing for Trumble Vision Services in Berlin.

Adam Kropf, OD is a 2018 graduate of the SUNY College of Optometry. Dr. Kropf is currently practicing for Wilton Family Eye Care in Wilton.

Our goal is to demonstrate that ODs are more cost-effective providers based upon avoiding hospitalization and mitigating surgery. ODs are accessible offering after hours appointments that allows individuals to get care without the cost and burdens of going to an urgent care center or hospital emergency room.

Anthem BCBS has already expressed that they will help us to communicate with their contracted groups if we require their assistance.

If you are interested in helping out with this initiative, please contact Laura Carabello lcabello@cpronline.com.

IN THE NEWS...

Primary Care Settings Offer Opportunity for Wider Screening

MedicalResearch.com Interview with: Diane M. Gibson, Ph.D. ...

Prior studies have found that screening for diabetic retinopathy in primary care settings using telemedicine increased screening rates among individuals with diabetes and among subgroups of individuals with diabetes who are at high risk of missing recommended eye exams.

<https://medicalresearch.com/author-interviews/primary-care-settings-offer-opportunity-for-wider-screening-for-diabetic-retinopathy/47258/>

Walgreens and CVS Remodeled Stores Focus More on Health Issues

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/18/look-at-walgreens-and-cvs-remodeled-stores-that-focus-more-on-health.html>

Kimberly Raucci, OD is a 2018 graduate of the MCPHS University College of Optometry. Dr. Raucci is currently practicing for Family Vision Center in Stratford.

If you know a non-member OD, please have them contact the CAO office at 860.529.1900 or email info@cteyes.org for information on how to join.

Annual Meeting and Awards



Left: Clint McLean, O.D. receives the President's Award from Immediate Past President Chris Swenby, O.D. in recognition of his many years of dedication and contributions to the CAO, the profession of optometry and



Right: Dr. Laura Dake-Roche receives the Brian Lynch Advocacy Award from the award's namesake, Dr. Brian Lynch. Dr. Dake-Roche has been instrumental in the CAO's Telephone Tree and the legislative grassroots effort.



Mark Chasse, O.D. receives the George Comstock Award, in recognition for his unselfish dedication to the profession of optometry. Dr. Swenby acknowledged Dr. Chasse's work with the CT DMW and the Connecticut chapter of the American Diabetes Association.



Dr. Irene Rosenberg accepts the 2018 Optometrist of the Year from Dr. Brian Lynch, the 2017 award recipient.



Dr. Barbara Dune congratulates Dr. John Nedelcu, winner of the 2018 Young O.D. of the Year Award. Dr. Dune is the 2017 Young O.D. of the Year winner.



L-R: AOA Trustee Chris Quinn, O.D., with 50 Year awardees Charles Bonelli, O.D., Howard Grad, O.D., Andrew Sokolik, O.D., and CAO President Erin McCleary



Larry Kline, O.D., receives his 40 year membership award from AOA Trustee Chris Quinn, O.D. and CAO President Erin McCleary

L-R: Chris Quinn, O.D., AOA Trustee, 25 Year Award winner Nancy Loveland, O.D., and CAO President Erin McCleary, O.D.



Edmund Swan, O.D., receives his 10 year membership award from AOA Trustee Chris Quinn, O.D. and CAO President Erin McCleary

MEMBERSHIP MILESTONE AWARDS

60 Years

Charles Connors, O.D.
D. Robert Pannone, O.D.

50 Years

Charles Bonelli, O.D.
Kenneth Burke, O.D.
Howard Grad, O.D.
Andrew Sokolik, O.D.

40 Years

Mark Feder, O.D.
Donald Fulton, O.D.
Lawrence Kline, O.D.
Michael Woronick, O.D.

25 Years

Stephanie Borey, O.D.
Michele Levy, O.D.
Nancy Loveland, O.D.
Heather Theriault, O.D.
Laura Vodopivec, O.D.

10 Years

Bijal Desai, O.D.
Michael Goldstein, O.D.
Christina Napoletano, O.D.
Jason Rutherford, O.D.
Michael Shea, O.D.
Andrew Stack, O.D.
Edmund Swan, O.D.
Julian Vermund, O.D.



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Is your practice *fully* protected? Every day, criminals are finding new ways to infiltrate your network and wreak havoc on your practice. Get a **free IT Security & Compliance Audit** (a \$300 value) to discover if your practice and patient data is secure!

Call us at **401-234-1022** or visit www.eyecareITsupport.com and use promo code: **CAONEWS** to schedule your **FREE IT Security & Compliance Audit**

We have **Flat Rate IT Support Plans** that include:

- **HIPAA Certified Technicians** —for your privacy and security
 - **Onsite & Remote Support**—no more worrying about what's included
 - **After Hours Emergency Support** —for your peace of mind
 - **Vendor Support** — we'll deal with your vendors directly so you don't have to!
- ...and *everything else* you expect from a **competent IT company**.

We provide IT support for eye care practices in **RI, MA and CT**. We work with multiple vendors including **Zeiss, Compulink, Eyefinity, TopCon, and more!** We are experienced in setting up devices and software from these vendors, as well as many others.

What Our Optometrists Say About Us:



Jim Boccuzzi, Owner and Founder of *Killingly Eye Care*

"I'm impressed by the level of care IT Support RI provides. They quickly learned the software we have that is specific to eye care. They have become **an essential partner to us**, and I would wholeheartedly recommend them to anyone who needs IT services. They respond quickly and fix the problem the first time. **Now I don't worry about proper backups, hardware or software issues, virus and malware protection or compliance with new government regulations.** We have used Nick and his team since 2012. **I could not recommend a better IT support company.**"

For More Info or to Contact Us:

401-234-1022

Mon-Fri: 8am-5pm

www.eyecareITsupport.com



Four Ways to Write a Better Career Center Post

If you're looking to hire an associate optometrist, or even a partner in your practice, you've likely considered posting an ad through an industry resource like the AOA's Optometry's Career Center. But, how can you be sure that your posting stands out from the rest and attracts the caliber of talent that you seek? These four tips will ensure that your opportunity is a top choice for the most qualified candidates:

1. **Be specific in your headline** – Instead of a generic headline like, "Seeking Associate Optometrist," write something specific like, "Seeking Associate Optometrist with Focus on Pediatrics, Full Benefits."
2. **Describe the role in detail within the post** – Be sure to explain the culture of your practice, what your patient base is like, and the equipment utilized in your practice. It's important that an applicant has a clear view of what life will be like working for and with you.
3. **Clearly list all benefits, both expected and unexpected** – All applicants will want to know what is offered in the way of retirement plans, health insurance, and paid time off. But, don't forget to include any unique benefits that you may offer. For example, does your practice pay for staff CAO and AOA membership dues, or attendance to any CE events or conferences throughout the year?
4. **Sell the greater community as well as your practice** – What makes your community a great place to live? If an applicant is considering relocating to take your position, what sort of local amenities can they enjoy in their free time?

Writing a winning career post is an important step to finding your dream hire, but equally important is deciding where to post it. Optometry's Career Center is the official career center of the AOA and uniquely caters to the optometric industry. CAO members can save up to 50% on their postings, which comes with free access to a resume database. Opportunities begin here – maximize your search nationwide and get started today.

New CAO Member Benefit: Save on cell phones, office supplies, and more

Access double-digit discounts with vendors you know and trust to provide everyday items for your optometry practice with the new group purchasing program from AOAExcel.

Group purchasing provides an easy way to reduce your overhead expenses by leveraging the purchasing volume from thousands of health care facilities to negotiate discounts with vendors including Verizon, Staples, BioD, Office Depot and more.

Through AOAExcel's group purchasing program with Intalere, CAO members can enroll in this discount program at no cost, as a member benefit – with the added benefit of no spending thresholds or annual spend requirements. Enjoy access to discounts with more than 500 of your favorite vendors, including:

- **Verizon:** 22% off all eligible calling plans \$34.99 and higher, plus free activation
- **BioD:** Up to 40% off amniotic membrane tissue
- **Office Depot:** Up to 65% off office products, plus annual rebates
- **Pitney Bowes:** Up to 55% off shipping

CAO members and their staff can sign up for group purchasing at ExcelOD.com/group-purchasing.

Claims-made vs. Occurrence: Which malpractice insurance is right for me?

When comparing professional liability insurance providers, it makes sense to look at scope of coverage, premium amount and policy limits to make an informed decision. Another important detail that can sometimes be overlooked – is the policy claims-made or occurrence coverage? Understanding the difference is vital. AOAExcel's insurance program administrator, Lockton Affinity, defines the two coverage options as:

- **Claims-made Policies:** These policies only provide coverage if the policy is in effect both when an incident took place and when a lawsuit is filed. This means that coverage must be extended for a significant period of time, as the period between when an incident occurs and when a claim is made could be considerable. For this reason, a Doctor of Optometry may choose to purchase additional tail coverage if they retire, move to a new practice, or switch malpractice providers – often as an unexpected additional expense.
- **Occurrence Policies:** Occurrence policies provide coverage for any event that took place while the policy is in

(continued on page 17)



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Anderson-Meyer Insurance would like to THANK YOU for your business!

For years we have assisted many COA members by providing a comprehensive insurance plan at a competitive rate. If you have not taken advantage of our insurance plans exclusively for COA members feel free to give us a ring or email! We are here to serve you.

Jeanne Forschino (jforschino@amiagency.com) – Business Insurance

Matthew March (mmarch@amiagency.com) – Personal Insurance

Anderson-Meyer Insurance

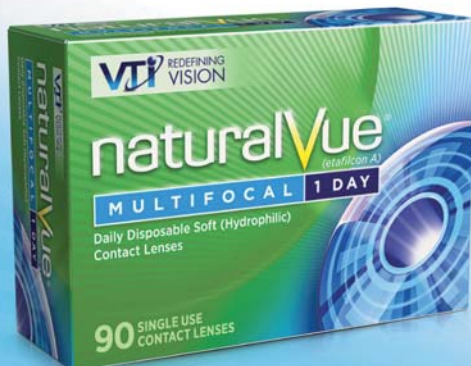
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Think About Your Eyes Launches Instagram Account

Instagram is home to 500 million daily users, where people and brands share photos promoting everyday moments, travel, fashion, and a multitude of other topics. With 60% of users saying they seek out and discover new products and brands on Instagram, and 75% taking action because of an Instagram post, the social media channel is a natural fit for Think About Your Eyes and its message of getting an annual eye exam. Follow along today: www.instagram.com/thinkaboutyoureyes



AOA excel (continued from page 15)

effect, even if it is no longer active when the claim is made. This gives occurrence policies an extended value to policyholders.

The malpractice insurance administered by Lockton Affinity provides guaranteed full scope of practice occurrence coverage with automatic updates and no surgical exclusions. For more information on AOAExcel's program with Lockton Affinity for CAO members, visit ExcelOD.com/business-liability.

The AOA Insurance Alliance program is administered by Lockton Affinity, LLC d/b/a Lockton Affinity Insurance Brokers, LLC in California. Policy benefits are the sole obligation of the issuing insurance company. The American Optometric Association may receive a royalty fee for the licensing of its name and trademarks as part of the insurance program offered to American Optometric Association members.

President's Message (continued from page 1)

Speaking of new faces – we have many to be thankful for! We have recently tapped many interested young OD members for feedback from PAC to membership and mentoring. Great things are in the works. We can't wait to bring fresh POVs to the table in the coming months.

Our most recent 2020 CE afternoon course presented (very accessible) pediatric eye care. One week later, I was fortunate to attend an Academic Committee meeting – and I can say that I am really impressed with the effort that our colleagues impart to select interesting and engaging topics requested by the membership, as identified by survey results. They sincerely want to provide current and forward-thinking topics in addition to vetted, well respected speakers.

I look forward to seeing you at our next CE offering!

10 REASONS TO JOIN AND USE VISION WEST

Vision West is the Preferred Eyecare Business Group of the Connecticut Association of Optometrists. To date, Vision West has provided over \$205,000 in non-dues revenue support.

1 NO MEMBERSHIP FEES, hidden contracts or minimum purchase requirements

2 27 YEARS STRONG

3 SUPPORTING the Independent Eyecare Provider to run better businesses

4 **INTEGRITY**—Live, friendly customer service team committed to helping you reduce your cost of goods. We pass on 100% of the negotiated discount from our vendor partners. Our team will provide an honest analysis of vendor programs and discounts to help your practice.

5 **SUPPORT TO ORGANIZED OPTOMETRY**—what does that mean for you? With more than \$8million dollars in support back to State Associations, Schools and Groups, this provides non-dues revenue to help with legislation, dues and education. A percentage of your purchases billed to your Vision West account provides \$ support to CAO.

6 FOUNDED BY OPTOMETRY FOR OPTOMETRY

7 **BUYING POWER**—with more than 3,000 members nationwide, Vision West can access some of the best discounts and programs in the industry from over 200 vendors.

8 **EFFICIENCY**—consolidated purchases on 1 statement. Flexible payment options and invoice details available online with 24/7 access to help you and your staff save time and manage information.

9 EXCLUSIVE REBATE PROGRAMS—from many of our top vendors

10 **RESOURCES** for you and your staff. Our team is here to help with resources and information on a wide number of topics including webinar education library, online CE, top-selling frame info and much more.

For more information and to join today,
contact a Customer Service specialist at:
800.640.9485 • www.vweye.com



AOA Update ■

AOA supports effort to hold insurers accountable, prohibit unfair trade practices

The AOA backs new legislation that curtails health insurance companies' anticompetitive practices, such as price fixing, bid rigging and market allocations, to protect patients against increased health care costs.

Introduced by U.S. Senators Steve Daines (R-Montana) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont), the Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act amends the McCarran-Ferguson Act—which exempted insurance companies from federal antitrust laws—to hold these companies accountable and ensures they are subject to the same laws which prohibit unfair trade practices.

AOA Board of Trustee Ron L. Benner, O.D., is quoted in a news release noting that “expanded access to quality health care in our communities, and for making accountability, fairness and more pro-patient competition the immediate priorities in Washington, D.C. Sen. Daines’ bill to eliminate the outdated and harmful anti-trust exemption for insurers is a tremendous step forward for patients and doctors in Montana and across our country, and I’m proud to support it.”

The McCarran-Ferguson Act of 1945 created a special-interest loophole, exempting insurance companies from federal antitrust laws. This recent bill will close that loophole.

To learn how you can get involved, including through AOA-PAC and the AOA Federal Keyperson program, contact AOA staffer Matt Willette.

AOA HPI details optometry’s primary eye care at health centers

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) bolstered their on-site, primary eye and vision care services with a 50 percent increase in doctors of optometry between 2014 and 2016, new research from AOA’s Health Policy Institute (HPI) finds.

Overall, FQHCs in 47 states and Washington, D.C., increased optometry full-time equivalents (FTEs) during this time, in turn helping increase the overall number of eye care patients served (38 percent) as well as the number of eye exams provided (45 percent). However, increases in just three states, all with an accredited school or college of optometry, account for nearly 56 percent of all optometry FTEs.

Unfortunately, these data also indicate a vast need remains for comprehensive, on-site primary eye care services in FQHCs that still offer no optometry service. For contrast, 2016 data shows fifteen times the number of FTE dentists at FQHCs nationwide versus doctors of optometry, while dental services accounted for nearly 14 percent of total clinic visits and eye care services accounted for only 0.77 percent.



American Optometric
Association

This incongruity in health care professionals and utilization of services

signals a substantial under-investment in resources for patients in need of vision care, particularly those 2 million with diabetes.

Read more about HPI’s FQHC research and the need for expanded, on-site primary eye care services.

Counterfeit contact lenses available on Amazon draws AOA response

The AOA takes seriously its responsibility as a reliable resource for eye care and health care policy information, recently approaching the world’s largest e-commerce retailer about vendors using its marketplace to sell contact lenses without a prescription.

In a letter sent to Amazon on Feb. 27, AOA underscored that contact lens sales sans prescriptions are violations not only of the Fairness to Contact Lens Consumer Act (FCLCA) but also Amazon’s own policy on “Medical Devices and Accessories,” given that contact lenses are regulated by both the Federal Trade Commission and Food and Drug Administration.

In addition to legal concerns related to the FCLCA, AOA noted concerning guidance from sellers related to their contact lenses, including such egregious and inappropriate instructions as “...gently press the contact lens opposite clockwise or counterclockwise turn 30 times, and put in a box for a new care solution ... if you do not use for a long time, please put it in the box soak with care solution, replace the care solution every three days.”

In response, Amazon thanked AOA for its diligence and reiterated its own medical devices policy while stating the company will take appropriate action when products are reported for legal non-compliance.

If doctors are aware of an illegal retailer or encounter a patient harmed by illegally procured contact lenses, here’s what to do.

4 FAQs on student loan refinancing

Student loan debt can play a significant role in a doctor’s financial strategy. Refinancing your student loans may help lessen the burden of loan repayment. Below are frequently asked questions when it comes to student loan refinancing:

1. Why should I refinance?

Refinancing student loans can add up to significant savings. By refinancing multiple loans into one loan with

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CAO SUMMER MEMBER OUTING

Please join us in the DATTCO Dugout Suite
at Dunkin' Donuts Park
Thursday, July 11, 2019

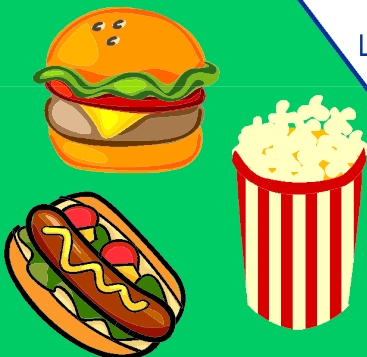
Yard Goats vs Trenton Thunder

Baseball Game starting time: 7:05 p.m.
(Gates open at 5:30 p.m.)

FREE admission to CAO members
\$45 per ticket for guests
includes access to the YardGoats Club,
DATTCO Dugout Suite, 2.5 hour buffet,
& water and soft drinks until the 9th inning

Tickets are VERY limited!!

To register please email:
Lynn Sedlak at lsedlak@cteyes.org
or call the CAO office at
860-529-1900



AOA Update (continued from page 19)

a lower rate, you will accrue less interest over the loan's life, saving you money.

2. Will checking my rate impact my credit score?

A soft credit check does not impact your credit score. A hard credit pull is required to prequalify or fully apply to refinance and can hurt your score if pulled by multiple lenders over time.

3. What's the difference between consolidation and refinancing?

Consolidating federal loans through a government program gives you one payment to service, by averaging the interest rates of loans being consolidated. Refinancing federal loans through a private lender provides an opportunity to repay these loans at a lower rate.

4. What is debt to income ratio?

Lenders measure student loan debt against a potential borrower's income to determine their debt-to-income ratio. Because of this, borrowers may be better qualified to refinance after they've had some time to build an income history.

Want to learn more? Join our webinar, "Student Loan Best Practices for AOA Members," 8:30 p.m. ET, Wednesday, April 24.

Three tips to evaluate the location of an optometry practice

There are many factors to consider when purchasing a practice, and location often plays a significant role. For doctors of optometry, the location of a practice will impact their family residence, daily commute and the patient base they will be serving – whether that is a sprawling urban metropolis or a small, quiet town. When assessing the location of a practice, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Surrounding Enterprises:** Consider the other businesses in the area and how they may affect your practice. If a potential location is in close proximity to another optometrist, there will be an inherent competition. Look for locations with businesses that may help drive traffic to your practice.
- **Accessibility:** Having parking and handicap-accessible entrances readily available is an easy way to improve your patients' experience. Accessibility should also encompass the ease of entrance from adjacent streets and intersections into your facility.
- **Cost of Business:** When researching practice locations, be sure to ask the current owner or the utility company for a summary of utility expenses for the last year. Commercial rates vary from residential and can give a

more comprehensive view of what your monthly expenses will be.

When it comes to purchasing a practice, location is just one piece of the puzzle. For more information about practice transitions for AOA members, [click here](#).

NEW! Access updated SPV, VR resources and webinars

Sports and performance vision (SPV) and vision rehabilitation (VR) services can be important offerings that strengthen and expand the primary eye care that doctors of optometry already provide in their communities. Whether doctors are interested in bolstering their existing care model or looking to incorporate an even more advanced menu of services into their practice, AOA is committed to helping doctors meet that goal.

The AOA offers all-new tools and resources to help members add SPV or VR services into their practice. These updated and expanded digital libraries help doctors identify and educate patients about specific eye care services, as well as assist practices in delivering new services, including the latest in technology, research and clinical pearls.

Access these new resources:

Sports & Performance Vision page

- Webinars
- Manuals
- SPV student online kit
- Fact sheets, pamphlets and brochures

[Click here](#) for more information about the SPV Advocacy Network.

Vision Rehabilitation page

- Webinars
- Manuals
- Student resources
- Fact sheets, pamphlets and brochures

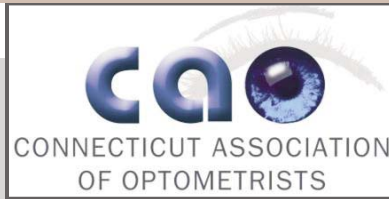
[Click here](#) for more information about the VR Advocacy Network.

Want to let patients know your SPV or VR emphasis? Update your myAOA profile to include an SPV/VR emphasis, and patients using AOA's "Find a Doctor" search tool can identify your services.

Get involved: Keep AOA's federal advocacy momentum going

Optometry is a legislated profession, and AOA takes seriously its responsibility of advocating for you. From Capitol Hill to countless federal agencies, we are fighting for fair

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Stoplight Job & Networking Event

Looking for a new associate or want full-time work?
Have part-time positions or looking to fill-in casually?

Join us for drinks, appetizers, an opportunity to network with
colleagues and participate in an informal job fair.

Monday, April 22, 2019

MEXICUE

15 Harbor Point Road

Stamford, CT 06902

6:00PM



RED= Networking only

YELLOW= Part-time positions or fill-in opportunities

GREEN= Looking to hire, or obtain, full-time positions

Registration is on a first come, first served basis, space is limited

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please RSVP by April 18th to the CAO Office:

Phone: (860) 529-1900 Fax: (860) 529-4411

Email: Stephanie.sbartos@cteyes.org

www.cteyes.org

Professional Opportunities

OPTOMETRIST WANTED - FULL TIME / ASSOCIATE / PARTNER

Full Time/Part Time OD

DOCTOR PAVANO & Associates

Our practice is looking for a full or part time Optometrist. If you are looking for a position, please give me a call.

We are a 32 year old high volume, highly medical Optometric practice, in the inner city here in Connecticut. We have three Optometrists now and are seeking a fourth to fill in one or more of our four locations. All doctors are affiliated with the Connecticut Association of Optometrists (CAO) and the AOA. Dr. Pavano is on the state board of examiners and Dr. Polezonis was the "CT 2012 Optometrist of the year". Dr. Polezonis is also the President-Elect! All of our doctors are heavily involved with the CAO and serve on various committees. All lecture for various pharmaceutical companies and various CE meetings. Connecticut is an excellent state to practice FULL SCOPE Optometry! Will you join our team?

Joe Pavano www.doctorpavano.com
860-223-7900 w 860-539-2450 cell

Optometrist

I am looking for an associate to eventually take over my busy VT practice sometime within 4 years. I would want someone to start out part time as I gradually teach the necessary skills to the person. I am an FCOVD and have spoken at the NW OEP Congress and the Solinsky Eyecare Conference and am well known for VT in the state. I see children and adults with reading problems, binocular problems, headaches, convergence problems, strabismus, ADD, and TBI and get referrals from many schools, other OD's, psychologists and neurologists. I have over 30 years' experience and am well respected in the field. It is a rewarding career for the right person who likes to help people. Contact: Dr. Phyllis Liu, drliuod@cs.com

Full Time/Part Time OD

Our Practice is looking for a motivated Doctor of Optometry with strong diagnostic skills and a passion for delivering patient-centered primary eye care for our 4 Connecticut locations. Experienced ODs and New Grads welcome. Current CT License required. We value individuals who are flexible, caring optometrists with excellent interpersonal skills. If you are a new grad, our practice is a great opportunity for you to hone your skills. We provide a supportive environment that will help you move from an optometry student into a practicing optometrist. As one of our optometrists, the responsibilities of practice management are handled for you, allowing you to spend your time with patients, not paperwork. You do not have to worry about running the business. No staffing issues, administrative work or headaches to take home with you after work.

You will also enjoy:

- A competitive salary plus bonus potential
- Convenient hours
- Paid time off and paid holidays
- A comprehensive benefits package including medical and 401K
- Paid liability insurance, licensing fees and CE
- Meaningful opportunities to give back locally and internationally
- A strong network of peers and mentors that fosters professional development

We are committed to providing the highest quality patient care and are looking for candidates that are dependable, caring optometrists, with an excellent chair side manner. All interested applicants please submit CV and salary requirements to Sharon Cahill, scahill@eyecarect.com

Optometric Physician

Optometric Physician Optometric Physicians always strive to provide our patients with extraordinary care. Your role as an Optometrist will be to serve each and every patient with expertise, friendliness, and compassion. If You are: All about putting the patient first Excited about providing high-quality care A technology and efficiency fan Motivated to grow personally and profes-

sionally Sparked by building relationship and processes Able to work independently in a fast paced environment Quick to smile and energetic Your new job will be: Practicing optometry at the highest level in a fully-equipped ever growing setting Utilizing electronic medical record systems and robust diagnostic and treatment technology Maintaining efficient patient flow throughout the patient encounter and examination process. Creating innovative practices geared for greater care ensuring that every patient feels comfortable and receives outstanding care throughout their encounter with us. Working with other team members to maintain the superior level of patient service. What You'll earn: A competitive salary Paid Time Off Paid Holidays Retirement Plan Health Insurance Disability Insurance Life Insurance Continuing education allowance Career innovation and development support Rewarding relationships with your patients Interdependence with a great team Other details: This is a Full Time role Have the flexibility to work days, weekends and some evenings Coverage between East Haven and Madison practice locations enVision is: A growing optometric practice that provides sophisticated medical care A team of highly trained professionals that believe passionately in providing the highest quality healthcare A showroom that delivers great eyewear Connection can be made by: Sending your curriculum vitae to Dr. Maria Diaz at dr.diaz@dr-maria-diaz.com

Excellent Opportunity in Hartford, CT

A growing optometry practice in Hartford, Connecticut is looking for a full time optometrist to deliver exceptional and professional vision care. Our practice offers modern facilities and state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment, certified EHR software, on-site optical, and experienced and friendly supportive staff. We offer full-scope optometry, including primary, medical, specialized contacts and routine vision exams. We offer a generous base salary, 401K retirement plan, paid vacation time, annual CE compensation and more.

(continued on page 24)

Professional Opportunities (continued from page 23)

Experienced ODs and new graduates welcome. If you are looking for a patient focused practice that offers work/life balance this could be the practice for you! Please email la.vision@aol.com

OPTOMETRIST NEEDED

Aucello EyeCare is currently looking to add an optometrist to join their busy private practice. Applicants must be confident and caring professionals who can handle a wide variety of ocular needs for patients of all ages. A flexible schedule, supportive staff, extensive co-management network with local specialists in a modern office with all the equipment you'll need to practice at your highest level awaits the right doctor. Excellent pay and benefits package. Please send resumes to OD2173@aol.com

Full-Time Optometrist

Friendly, enthusiastic doctor wanted for newly refurbished central Connecticut primary care office. Practice the way you want without the headaches of billing, paperwork or staffing. Doctor to staff newly renovated office with updated equipment and electronic medical recordkeeping. Steady, competitive income provided as well as support from an experienced optometrist. Have your own practice, but have a life as well. Will hold position for the right 2018 graduate. Please send C.V. to Dr. Ryan Trimble at TrimbleVision@hotmail.com

Eastern Eye Care - WILLIMANTIC

Willimantic practice seeks full-time optometrist to join one full-time OD in modern practice of medical optometry, contact lenses. Large optical shop. Competitive compensation, 401k, benefits. Looking for the potential of a long term commitment with opportunity for future purchase. Eastern Eye Care, easterneyecare.com. Contact: Mary Pearson at 860.423.2111

OPTOMETRIST WANTED - FULL AND/OR PART TIME

Part-time OD needed in Danbury or Stamford.

Part-time OD needed in Danbury or Stamford. Friendly patient base. Attentive staff. Excellent compensation and equipment. Please contact Dr. Wong by e-mail eyevan@hotmail.com

Employment Opportunity for Full time or Part time OD

Job Opportunity for full time/Part time Optometrist in Fairfield County Connecticut. Great place for recent grads. Vision Center Associates LLC Seeking a full time/part time optometrist to join our well established privately owned independent practice. We consist of 3 Offices: Our main office in Bridgeport, and our other two satellite offices in Trumbull and Southport Connecticut. Diverse patient base, full scope of practice. Partnership opportunity would be considered. If interested, please contact : Dr. Nilka Pabon Kikipabon@gmail.com

Looking for Optometrist for our Kent CT Practice - Flexible (Full/Part Time or Per Diem)

Blondin Shea Eyecare is a private practice located in the Northwest Corner of Connecticut. We are currently seeking a part-time Optometrist for our new Kent office. Position includes: • Opportunity to grow to full time • State of the art practice with Electronic Health Records • Well trained staff • Practice treats patients like family • Beautiful country setting Contact Rose for details Roseblondin@gmail.com www.blondinsheaeye.com

Busy Practice looking for qualified OD for PT

Busy, established primary care practice with emphasis on POAG, T2DM, OSD and Peds. Full support staff including scribe (Crystal EMR) and instrumentation supported by Zeiss Forum. Full optical staff with in house edging. Competitive fixed or incentive-based pay. Cell: 203.644.0038 Email: pawnsac@snet.net

Visual Perceptions Eyecare is now a part of MyEyeDr. Optometry of Connecticut! We are seeking an Optometrist to join our very successful, full-scope practices in Hartford!

We are seeking a full-time optometrist with excellent clinical and patient communication skills to join a practice dedicated to providing its patients with state of the art eye health and vision care services. We have a well-established, yet progressive, optometric practice with a great combination of medical, specialty contact lens and optical. The practice is equipped with state of the art technology and experienced staff to fully support the practice of medical optometry. Eyefinity EHR is fully implemented. We offer an excellent financial compensation package including salary/bonus/medical and comprehensive fringe benefits. License fees, AOA, state professional dues and continuing education costs are reimbursed. Whether you are preparing to graduate or are an experienced Optometrist, we welcome the opportunity to speak with you! Reach out to me ~ I would love to talk to you about this opportunity! Maria Carvalho Esteves Recruiting Manager for Professional Services 571.585.0910/mesteves@myeyedr.com

Amazing Opportunity for Full or Part-Time O.D. with 4 offices in the Greater Hartford Area

Lucrative salary and full benefits with flexibility available in a full scope practice. Latest equipment includes digital phoropters, camera's and OCT's in all offices. We are looking for a personable O.D. to join our growing team. Offices are located in Avon, Bristol, Middletown and Vernon. Signing bonus and housing possibly available. Interested candidates please contact Jenny Cha, O.D @ jcha@oculusdocs.com or call/text 860-916-4753. New graduates are welcome! www.oculusdocs.com

(continued on page 25)

Professional Opportunities (continued from page 24)

Great Opportunity for Full or Part-time Optometrist

We are looking for a Full or Part-time Optometrist to practice full scope optometry in our Manchester, Connecticut office. Our equipment includes an OCT, Daytona Optomap, and Humphrey Visual Field. We are offering a generous salary with benefits including medical insurance, 401K, license reimbursement, malpractice insurance, and money towards continuing education. Experienced optometrists, residents, and new grads are welcome to apply. We also have experience with H1B visas. Interested candidates please contact regan.marquis@gmail.com

We are seeking for full time or part time optometrists for a busy corporate offices in Groton, Brooklyn and Putnam, CT and part-time in our private practice in Danielson CT.

We are located in the Northeastern part of the state. We are nestled in a very quaint rural and semi-rural towns. We practice medical optometry and our private practice is a good referral center from many optometrists in our region. We have advanced state of the art technology. Our staff is caring and well trained. We have a very generous starting pay for either part time or full time positions (plus additional incentive bonuses) and our benefit package includes PTO, CE allowance and paid licenses. We are looking for energetic, personable, motivated and hard-working individuals who would like high income potential and practice full scope optometry. New grads are highly encouraged. Please send resume to PO Box 53 Brooklyn, CT 06234 or email at GStirbaOD@gmail.com for more information.

OPTOMETRIST WANTED - PART TIME / FILL-IN / PER DIEM

Weekend fill-in OD needed in Stamford or Danbury

Weekend fill-in OD needed in Stamford or Danbury. Great compensation, friendly patient base. Well-trained staff and state of the art equipment. Please e-mail Dr. Wong at eyevan@hotmail.com if interested.

King Family Eye Care LLC Part Time (PT) Optometrist Wanted Located In Rocky Hill Connecticut

King Family Eye Care LLC Part Time (PT) Optometrist Wanted Located In Rocky Hill Connecticut Growing Optometric Practice in Central Connecticut is looking for a licensed Doctor with an advanced certification of Optometry to join our practice in our Rocky Hill office for part-time hours on Saturdays from 9-4. We are a progressive practice that provides a competitive wage, utilizes the latest state of the art digital exam equipment, and is staffed by an experienced team of trained technicians. Please reply to Dr. Matthew King by either mobile phone 860-271-6502 or by email at drmattking@sbcglobal.net.

Classifieds

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE

Marco/Nidek AFC 330 Non Myd Retinal Camera

Nidek AFC 330 Non Myd Camera with Navis Software .Excellent condition. Table included. Purchased 2016 for \$18,000. Asking \$10,000. Contact me either email lghochberg1@gmail.com or office 203-287-1595 Louis Hochberg,O.D.

PRACTICES FOR SALE

NEW LONDON COUNTY - Optometry Practice #: CT 1004

This practice opportunity is located in New London County. Three-year average gross revenue is \$1,339,841,000 and three-year average net income is \$490,919. The Practice utilizes Eyefinity Practice Management software. The Practice has state of the art equipment: Cirrus 4000 HD OCT, Carl Zeiss Visucam, Corneal Topography Atlas 9000 and Carl Zeiss Humphrey Matrix. The office is 4,900 square feet, immaculate and clean. It is located in a professional office building on a main road with high visibility. It contains six exam lanes, a retinal photography room, a visual field test room, an OCT ultrasound test room, an optical dispensary, a contact lens room, a large waiting area, a business office and break room. There is an Associate Optometrist, an office manager and 6 cross trained technician staff members. This is an outstanding opportunity for a new owner, who has the potential to earn \$345,000 in the first year of ownership after paying debt service to the lender who finances the practice acquisition loan. Please visit www.practice-exchange.com to register for more information. You can call or email Norm Kelly of Practice Exchange at 800-786-1389 or email norm@practice-exchange.com.

AOA Update (continued from page 21)

treatment and improved access for patients and the AOA members on which they rely for their comprehensive eye care.

But, AOA needs your help. Together, we can work to better protect patients and keep up the momentum that our advocates have diligently built. And AOA offers the latest tools to help you join:

- **Directly Advocate with Lawmakers.** AOA's newly upgraded online legislative action center gives doctors instant, mobile-friendly access to the priority federal issues that AOA needs you to support. With greater detail and insights about legislators, doctors have all the information they need to make contact. Set up your access.
- **Become an AOA Keyperson.** The AOA Federal Keypersons Network helps the profession keep lawmakers informed about optometry's priorities. With a new crop of lawmakers coming to Congress, the profession will need new AOA Federal Keypersons with close relationships to incoming lawmakers. Contact AOA staff for info.

Help Keep AOA-PAC an Advocacy Force. The AOA-PAC is one of the most effective ways to participate in the political process. Help us keep up the fight by investing in AOA-PAC today. AOA members can visit aoapac.org to invest or try new text-to-donate technology by texting EYES to 41444.

4 ways to make the most of AOA membership

Recognized as the foremost advocate for the profession, AOA is committed to advancing the science, stature and business of optometry. That's why you're an AOA member. But, did you know membership comes with a suite of benefits? Here are four categories of benefits:

1. **Member resources.** AOA membership grants doctors and staff access to resources for all facets of practice, including AOA MORE (Measures and Outcomes Registry for Eyecare) and the AOA MIPS Support Team; clinical care resources, such as AOA's evidence-based clinical practice guidelines, Brain Injury Electronic Resource Manuals, Pediatrics & Binocular Vision resource kit; paraoptometric education; and public education and practice management products through AOA Marketplace.
2. **Optometry's public awareness.** Leverage AOA's campaign messages throughout the year by accessing AOA's Public Education & Campaign Materials and learn more about optometry's "Got Milk" campaign in Think About Your Eyes.
3. **Volunteer opportunities.** Make a difference in the profession by volunteering for professional committees or

consider participating in one of Optometry Cares®—The AOA Foundation initiatives, such as InfantSEE® or Healthy Eyes Healthy Children.

4. **Professional networking.** Make connections at our premier conference, Optometry's Meeting®, or open the latest AOA Focus to stay up-to-date with the profession.

Visit the AOA Guide to Member Benefits

Paraoptometric resources benefit the entire practice

Staff knowledge is vital, and that's why more AOA doctors are taking advantage of a member benefit that helps doctors revolutionize the hiring and training of their care team. Paraoptometricians can enroll as AOA associate members – at no cost to member doctors – to access educational and developmental resources available through the Paraoptometric Resource Center.

The nation's largest organization serving the needs of optometric assistants and technicians, the Paraoptometric Resource Center, offers associate member benefits, including:

- **Free, online CE worth six hours of credit**
- Paraoptometric Skill Builder® Beginner Level 1 program
- Access to member-only web pages
- Discounted fees for paraoptometric education material
- Reduced registration fees for Optometry's Meeting®

These benefits equip staff with the knowledge and skillset necessary to optimize your practice performance – and best of all, it's something all AOA members can access. Just enroll staff today.

How to enroll staff

1. Click here to login to your 'My Profile/My AOA' selection at aoa.org
2. Select 'Manage Staff' tab
3. Enter the legal name, birthdate and unique email address for each non-optometrist staff member you wish to enroll

Click here to read more about the benefits of enrolling staff.

Member Spotlight ■

By Sid Shafran

Partners in Grime

Trinidad Moruga Scorpion is the world's hottest hot pepper with a mean heat of 1.2 million Scoville units. If that sounds like a foreign language to you then I would consult with Tad Bartles and Sherry Vanliere. Tad and Sherry are Advanced Master Gardeners = partners in grime. Tad is also an expert on chili peppers, clarinet, bass guitar, insects & plants, muscle cars and, oh yeah, eyes.

With all these interests, it is no wonder that Tad & Sherry retired in 2018 after 44 years in Optometry. Most people wonder what to do in retirement. I'm surprised that Tad had any time to practice Optometry.

Let's take a time trip back to the '60's. Tad was running track, teaching himself to play the guitar (lefty) and working at Berk's Optical in Waterbury. Born into an optometry family, Tad's Dad, Ted was an O.D. who went to The Columbia School of Optometry. So it was either work at TRW Ball bearing factory or stay in the optical family. Tad spent his summers delivering jobs to area optometrists. Walking three times a day to each office and spending lunches with Phil Joseph, O.D. Tad's experience with his Dad, Phil Joseph and the draft lottery in 1969 (Tad drew #25 and his roommate #365) led him to stop running Boston University track and apply to the New England College of Optometry after 3 years of undergraduate school. Good thing because Nixon was elected President and escalated the Vietnam War.

Music is a part of Tad's life. Tad is secretary and has been in The Bristol Brass and Wind Ensemble for 20 years. When asked why the bass guitar, Tad said that many of the bands needed a bass guitarist. You have seen/heard Tad's talent at the Saturday night entertainment at the CAO annual meeting. Tad wears two hats at the Annual meeting as musician and CAO education chair.

Tad and Sherry, partners in grime, real passion is gardening. They are both Advanced Master Gardeners. Beginning in 2011, Tad and Sherry started 16 weeks of master gardener course commitment, 30 hours of community outreach education in the Middlesex County Extension office. All land grant universities were required to have an extension service since the 1850's. Participation in two regional fairs, a voluminous tree, plant and shrub project and finally a practicum on sixty plant and insect specimens. Advanced Master Gardeners also have more education and volunteer obligations.

Set behind a busy road in Farmington, Tad and Sherry's home outside resembles a farm. Raised beds for lilies, flowers, vegetables, meadow, garlic and the Row of Death (more on that later). There are sitting areas in the shade, by the stream and up in the tree house. All a serene setting in the winter but a very busy place other seasons. The Row of Death is the chili pepper area. These are not the red and yellow peppers in your restaurant salad. Some of these are nuclear and you and I would not want to taste or handle them. Known as the Madman in the Garden, Tad believes that more is better - hotter and hotter. Chilli peppers get their hot spicy flavor from capsaicin and capsaicinoids. They have been cultivated for 1000's of years. Curious, you can visit the Totally Tomato website or Tad and Sherry at <https://www.gardeningwithamadman.com> -a fun trip with Tad and Sherry around their gardens.

Tad relates a story of a visiting Boy Scout from Thailand at the Middlesex Extension garden, picking the hot, hot peppers and eating them like candy. Without the usual exclamation of pain and running for a drink. Tad's chili pepper fascination began with a welt on the face from touching a hot pepper.

Tad's love of all things more extends to muscle cars. You may have seen Tad and Sherry cruising in his 5.0 Mustang. It replaced his Olds 442 (four barrel carburetor, four speed manual transmission and dual exhausts).

With all these loves, Tad and Sherry have time for their two sons - one a sail maker in Maine and one a teacher, two grandchildren and another on the way.

Sounds like solid retirement and a continuing learning experience.

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Top Five Tips for Surviving a Connecticut Medicaid Audit ■

Connecticut Medicaid providers, including optometrists, are subject to periodic audits by the Department of Social Services ("DSS"). Auditors visit the practice location, scrutinize records, extrapolate billing errors, and demand repayment of allegedly improperly paid claims. While this audit process is often stressful and time consuming, by taking the following five steps, providers can mitigate their risk.

TIP #1: Know the Process

Understanding the audit process, which often takes several months from beginning to end, goes a long way toward alleviating stress. The Connecticut Medicaid audit process is set forth in Connecticut General Statutes §17b-99¹. Providers may be chosen to be audited at random or for any specific reason, such as billing certain codes in a higher volume than their peers.

Thirty days before the audit begins, DSS issues a written notice to the provider regarding the audit, setting forth basic information such as (i) the name and contact information of the assigned auditor or auditors, (ii) the audit location, (iii) the manner by which information requested shall be submitted, and (iv) the statistically valid sampling and extrapolation methodology to be used in conducting the audit. Notice is not required in cases where DSS has made a good faith determination that the health or safety of a patient is at risk or the provider is engaging in fraud. In such cases, DSS may appear unannounced.

The audits take place on-site at the provider's practice location. Typically, a random sample of 100-150 claims are reviewed. The audits usually cover three years of claims, but DSS is only permitted to audit claims that were paid within the three years prior to the audit. Within sixty days after the conclusion of the on-site audit, DSS issues a preliminary draft report, which sets forth all of the errors identified by the auditors ("findings") and the calculated extrapolation amount. Extrapolation is the means through which DSS projects the identified errors in the sample of records across the entire universe of claims being audited. Extrapolation is only used when the extrapolated error amount exceeds 1.75% of the total claims paid in the audit period.

For example, imagine a case where DSS audited an optometry practice and reviewed paid claims from November 1, 2015 to November 1, 2018, with total Medicaid payments of \$1,554,048. If DSS identified \$7,716.96 in errors, it would then extrapolate that amount across the universe of claims

using a statistical calculation and require the provider to payback \$233,754.

After receiving the preliminary report, the provider then has thirty days to submit additional documentation to rebut the findings. If needed, the provider can request an extension of time. At this stage it is important to carefully review each of the findings and assemble both written explanations and well as supporting evidence from the medical/billing records. This process is time consuming and can be frustrating for providers who have busy practices, but in order to convince DSS to remove findings from the audit report, a clear and evidence-supported case must be made for each individual finding.

After the thirty day response is submitted, DSS will generally issue a revised draft audit report and an exit conference will be scheduled. The exit conference is a face-to-face meeting between DSS and the provider where the revised draft audit report is discussed and the provider has the opportunity to orally refute any of the audit findings. DSS generally works with the provider, and the provider's legal counsel, if applicable, to determine a mutually acceptable date. The exit conference takes place at DSS' office in Hartford. Within sixty days after the exit conference, DSS issues a final audit report.

The issuance of the final audit report triggers the thirty day time period for the provider to file a request for a hearing. No extensions of time are granted. The request must include a detailed written description of each specific item of aggrievement. The hearing takes place before a DSS hearing officer who is required to issue a final decision on the case no later than ninety days after the close of the hearing. If the provider is unsatisfied with the hearing officer's decision, an appeal can then be filed in Connecticut Superior Court. DSS generally recoups funds through offset of new Medicaid claims, but if a hearing is requested, DSS cannot recoup any money until a final decision is rendered by the hearing officer. In some instances, where the recoupment amount is high, DSS may grant an extended payback period.

TIP #2: Be Professional

Although the audit process can be aggravating, it is essential to set a professional tone with the auditors and with DSS. A provider that is rude and uncourteous will not make a good impression. Since there is discretion in the way that the

(continued on page 29)

Top Five Tips for Surviving a Connecticut Medicaid Audit (continued from page 28)

auditors draft the findings, establishing a cooperative rapport is important. Give the auditors comfortable working space and ask if they have any questions, require explanations of the record system, or want to discuss any particular notes. Many findings can be avoided entirely by engaging in this type of dialogue right from the start.

Also a professional response to the preliminary audit report is critical to having findings removed. The response should be typed, well-written, easy to follow, organized by sample, and include supporting documentation organized in chronological order. Consider highlighting the pertinent part of the records and transcribing notes that may be handwritten and difficult to read.

TIP #3: Avoid Fraud Allegations

The cover up is worse than the crime. Although it might seem tempting to start “fixing” notes during the audit, altered records will often be noticeable and trigger a referral to the government’s fraud enforcement agency. Paying DSS, even an extrapolated amount, is better than facing license termination or serving jail time. Do not add missing signatures or dates to notes. Do not attempt to insert additional information about the patient into the record. In the rare instance when a correction must be made to a record, do not cross anything out or use white-out, and make sure to clearly include the date that the correction was made in the record.

Make copies of everything that is provided to the auditor. Sometimes well-meaning support staff will alter documentation after the audit, while preparing the thirty-day response. If there are copies of the documentation that was presented to the auditor, the provider can make sure that everything provided in the thirty-day response matches the documentation collected by the auditor during the audit. Having these copies will also make it easier to understand the auditor’s perspective and to respond, as it may become apparent that she was missing certain parts of the record.

TIP #4: Challenge the Findings

As mentioned above, the audit process provides ample opportunity for providers to challenge the findings. In the thirty-day response and again at the exit conference, providers have the opportunity to tell their side of the story. Factual errors and legal errors should be addressed. Do not always accept the authority cited by DSS in support of its findings. Research statutes, regulations, and DSS guidance to formulate challenges

to the cited authority. For example, only the rules that were in effect at the time that the claim was submitted can be used by DSS to disallow payment, not the rules that may currently be in effect. Also, for example, if a claim was disallowed in its entirety, a provider might be able to argue that the disallowance should only be the difference between what was billed erroneously and what should have been billed. Furthermore, providers should identify underpayments in the samples and bring them to DSS’ attention.

Besides for challenging the individual findings, providers should also consider challenging the sampling and extrapolation methodology. In certain cases, providers may be able to argue that particular disallowed claims should not be extrapolated. For example, if a billing error was made because of a technological glitch in an electronic health record system and the provider could prove that the glitch only existed for a 2-week period, the provider may argue that it is inappropriate to extrapolate such an isolated error across the universe of claims. Providers should also consider hiring a statistician to challenge the mathematical validity of DSS’ extrapolation methodology.

TIP #5: Take Preventative Measures Now

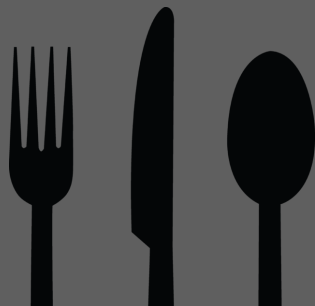
Any health care provider knows well the adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Taking steps in advance of being audited to ensure that billing, coding, and documentation practices are fully compliant is a prudent step for every provider to take. For Medicaid providers, where the stakes are even higher, taking such steps is even more important. DSS maintains a website² where optometrists can access the Medicaid Provider Manual, including the chapters specifically applicable to vision care, as well as the Policy Bulletins that have been issued over time. Make sure that the Medicaid rules are fully understood and implemented by all practice staff. Train employees as needed and audit the documentation and the bills periodically. If even a portion of the resources expended on taking these steps avoid future Medicaid audit findings, it will be money well spent.

If you would like further information or have questions about the audit process, contact Jody Erdfarb at JErdfarb@wiggins.com.

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1. Available at: https://www.cga.ct.gov/2017/pub/chap_319s.htm#sec_17b-99.
 2. See CTDSSMAP.com.



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