



American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association

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AOPA In Advance SmartBrief

Breaking News

October 30th, 2014

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AOPA Attends OMHA's 2nd Medicare Appellant Forum

The Office of Medicare Hearings and Appeals (OMHA)'s second Appellant Forum on October 29th attracted a much smaller on-site participation level than their earlier forum in February and any hoped for relief from the long ALJ hearing delays did not emerge.

Chief Administrative Law Judge, Nancy Griswold, confirmed their office is receiving approximately 14,000 appeals per week compared to 1,250 per week in 2011 prior to the "Dear Physician" letter which triggered the dramatic increase in RAC audits. She announced the time from the request for a hearing until an ALJ decision is rendered is currently 414.8 days and is expected to increase. An 18.6 percent budget increase for 2014 with additional increases expected in 2015 should provide some relief and a new field office in Kansas City with 7 new ALJ teams with 10 more expected in 2015 will further relieve the backlog. CMS now has a Patient Relations Coordinator to help improve relations between providers and CMS stakeholders, and she will assist in educating contractors. Joe McTernan, AOPA's Director of Coding and Reimbursement Services, Education and Programming along with Lauren Andersen, Manager of Communications, Policy, and Strategic Initiatives, attended. [Click here](#) for a full summary of the forum.



Office of Medicare
Hearings and Appeals

The O&P Alliance, including AOPA, meet with CMS Chronic Care Director and Staff



The O&P Alliance held a meeting October 22 with CMS Chronic Care Director Laurence Wilson, who is in charge of the Off the Shelf (OTS) and Competitive Bidding program, as well as key members of his staff. Tom Fise, Executive Director of AOPA, Steve Fletcher of ABC, Peter Rosenstein of AAOP, Jeff Price of BOC, and Peter Thomas on behalf of the O&P Alliance were in attendance.

As you may recall, CMS has issued two proposed rules in 2014, affecting both prosthetics and orthotics. CMS released a proposed rule on July 11 that addressed Off-the-shelf Orthoses and the definition of Minimal Self-Adjustment. The proposed rule would add physicians, treating practitioners, PTs and OTs as “individuals with specialized training” to the current definition that includes certified orthotists as qualified individuals to provide custom fitting of orthoses. The proposed rule also states that orthotic assistants and fitters are not considered to have specialized training for the purposes of providing custom fitting of orthoses and therefore any devices they fit or adjust will be considered OTS.

The issue of OTS Orthotics was one of the first issues taken up at the meeting. The Alliance discussed the recent letter from Senators Harkin and Grassley to CMS Administrator Tavenner on the expansive definition of OTS orthotics adopted by CMS and made the case that CMS essentially wrote the word “self” out of the statutory term minimal self-adjustment. The Alliance also discussed AOPA’s data from the Dobson DaVanzo report on the number of patients who receive custom orthotics after receiving OTS orthotics, undercutting CMS’s arguments about cost savings. The Alliance also spoke about certified orthotic fitters and how the proposed rule is inconsistent with how CMS has treated fitters to date.

On May 28, CMS issued a proposed rule that would require 89 lower limb prosthetic codes to be subject to prior authorization, without eliminating subsequent RAC audits or providing a guarantee of payment.

The Alliance discussed how a prior authorization demonstration on wheelchairs does not mean that CMS can apply prior authorization to everything, especially clinical care like lower limb prostheses. Some CMS staff did not seem to be aware that prior authorization applied to prosthetics, so the meeting provided an excellent educational opportunity on that point. After discussing how prior authorization was not a good fit for O&P care, and how many practitioners supported prior authorization only when compared to extensive RAC audits as the alternative, the Alliance discussed recommendations for making the proposal palatable, which can be found in the [AOPA Submitted Comments](#).

The CMS staff in attendance were familiar with the comments submitted by AOPA, its members, and patients regarding the proposed rules, and were aware of the Congressional letter on off-the-shelf orthotics. CMS made no indications on when and if the competitive bidding would be implemented for off-the-shelf orthotics, or when any proposed rules may be implemented. Prior Authorization is overseen by Deputy Administrator Dr. Shanatu Agrawal, MD, so he is being contacted for a potential meeting.

It's Time for 2015 AOPA Membership Renewal – Check your Mail this Week

Your 2015 Membership Renewal is in the mail to you this week. You can renew membership with the invoice you receive in the mail, or online. All members will also be receiving an email with login information and a link to renew online.

Don't let your membership lapse! You won't want to miss out on all the important benefits you've come to rely on: unlimited coding and billing advice from our reimbursement experts, access to members-only LCodeSearch.com, increased visibility to prospective patients through our online directory, member savings on all AOPA seminars and the National Assembly, significant discounts on information-packed products, discounts with our business partners UPS for your shipping needs and Bank of America Merchant Services for credit card processing, and more.

Please contact Betty Leppin at BLEppin@AOPAnet.org or 571/431-0876 if your company address or contact information has changed, or for information about joining AOPA.

Get Your AOPA Insurance Program Quote with Cailor Fleming Insurance

The American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association (AOPA) and Cailor Fleming Insurance announced the renewal of their partnership effective January 1, 2015 to serve the Orthotic and Prosthetic profession with a wide range of custom designed insurance products for O&P facilities and manufacturers. Jim Weber, MBA, AOPA Board Treasurer, and Thomas F. Fise, JD, Executive Director of AOPA, made the announcement at AOPA headquarters stating they “are pleased with the result. AOPA is extending the relationship with Cailor Fleming for another 5 years.”



**AMERICAN
ORTHOTIC & PROSTHETIC
ASSOCIATION**
SERVING THE O&P FIELD FOR OVER 90 YEARS



“Because of the unique exposures the industry faces, we designed an insurance program specifically for these risks and offer comprehensive protection that helps your business succeed, whether it's a patient care facility, central fab, manufacturer, or distributor” said Don Foley, a principal of Cailor Fleming insurance and the manager of the firm's O&P program. “Royalty payments Cailor Fleming makes to AOPA based on their premium revenue helps make sure AOPA has the resources it needs to hire the most talented lobbying team, conduct comparative effectiveness research, and continue to offer its wide range of services to members.”

Insurance coverage for AOPA members currently insured in the AOPA program will remain in force. Cailor Fleming will be available to present coverage and cost proposals to any interested AOPA members. The AOPA Insurance Program offers broad property, general and professional liability. In addition, when needed, auto, umbrella and workers compensation can be written.

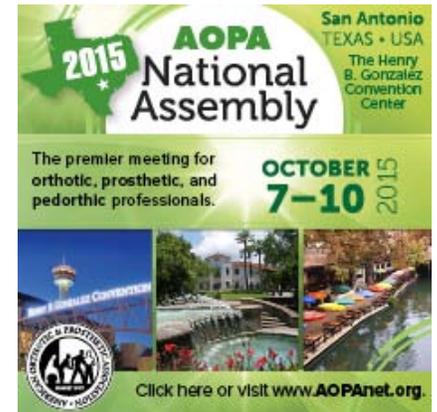


To get your insurance quote, please contact Don Foley at dfoley@cailorfleming.com or call 330/782-8068. You may also visit [Cailor Fleming online](#).

Attention all 2014 National Assembly Exhibitors – Sign up for 2015 Now!

Exhibit space is still exclusively available for you at the 2015 National Assembly. The general sales campaign will begin on Monday, November 3rd.

AOPA is currently organizing its 2015 National Assembly, which will take place in San Antonio, TX on October 7-10, 2015 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center. This event, the oldest and largest of its kind in the United States, will feature dedicated tracks of the most relevant education for prosthetists, orthotists, technicians, pedorthists and business managers. Participants will also learn from attending MDs, PhDs, Wound Care Specialists, Research Scientists, Attorney's, Business Experts and Top-Notch Practitioners.



Exhibiting at this important event will give you the opportunity to:

- Build your customer base and increase sales by meeting with Owners who actually make the final decisions on purchases.
- Experience face-to-face time with existing customers to answer questions and build new relationships.
- Enjoy sponsored networking opportunities, including an opening reception in the exhibit hall.
- Take advantage of fun traffic-building opportunities.
- Take advantage of education sessions to learn what's happening with regulatory agencies that affect the success of your product.
- Increase visibility for your company/organization in a targeted market.
- Host a Manufacturer's Workshop and/or Product Preview Theater presentation.
- Speak to AOPA reimbursement experts who can answer all your O&P coding, reimbursement and compliance questions.
- Hear from top researchers and clinicians to learn what products and support is needed from manufacturers.
- Participate in key education programs and plenary sessions.
- Be a part of the largest exhibit hall in the US for the orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic professions
- Much more!

If you didn't select a booth in Las Vegas, now's the time! Click here for [information on exhibiting](#). Contact Kelly O'Neill at KOneill@AOPAnet.org or 571/431-0852 with any questions.



AOPA Collaborates with ORTO Medical Care's 2014 Meeting in Madrid

Great News!

The United States of America will be the official guest country of Orto Medical Care 2014, the top orthopedic trade show of South Europe. In Madrid (Spain), November 20th and 21st, you will have the best stage for your products and the perfect meeting point for building relationships.



In collaboration with the American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association (AOPA), ORTO Medical is preparing an agenda (scientific and touristic) especially for American professionals. Please contact them if you are interested in a copy of the specially tailored agenda.

You can find the [list of exhibitors here](#).

Questions? Contact Cristina Mora at ortho2014@fedop.org or visit www.ortomedicalcare.com.

orto Medical Care 2014

FERIA DE LA ORTOPROTÉSICA, PRODUCTOS DE APOYO A LA DISCAPACIDAD
Y SERVICIOS PROFESIONALES A LA TERCERA EDAD

TRADE FAIR FOR ORTHOPAEDICS, TECHNICAL AIDS AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY

November 12 Webinar: Gifts: Showing Appreciation Without Violating the Law

Medicare has very specific rules about what you can and cannot do. What is and is not considered a kickback and how to acknowledge referral sources without getting into trouble. Also a general discussion of other types of activity that can be interpreted as a kickback.

- When gifts to referral sources are acceptable
- When gifts to patients are acceptable
- Federal Anti-Kickback regulation prohibitions
- Doing something nice vs. doing something illegal

The cost of participating is \$99 for AOPA members (\$199 for nonmembers) and any number of employees may partake on a given line. Attendees earn 1.5 continuing education credits by returning the provided quiz within 30 days and scoring at least 80%. [Register online](#).



Contact Devon Bernard at DBernard@AOPAnet.org or 571/431-0854 with content questions. Contact Betty Leppin at BLEppin@AOPAnet.org or 571/431-0876 with registration questions.

14 Year Old Palestinian Will Walk for the First Time Under NCOPI Care

Fourteen year old Palestinian, Hebatallah Shaheen, flew from Gaza to Raleigh on September 24th to meet the foster family that will care for her as she undergoes treatment to obtain the lower-leg prosthesis she has needed since birth. Due to a lack of access to quality medical care in Gaza, Shaheen has lived all of her 14 years without walking. She will take her first steps in Goldsboro, NC, where North Carolina Orthotics and Prosthetics (NCOPI) practitioner William Stauffer is working to fit her with a new leg.

Shaheen's trip to North Carolina is the result of coordination by the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF), which works to secure free care for Middle Eastern children with severe medical needs. The American non-profit has worked on Hebatallah's behalf to organize travel, lodging, and needed medical equipment and care while in the United States. NCOPI, a regional Orthotics and Prosthetics firm with five locations throughout the state, has agreed to provide fabrication and fitting services and will be using donated prosthetic components from prominent equipment manufacturers, Freedom Innovations and Ossur.



Shaheen is living with an Arabic-speaking family in Greenville and will remain there until she has been fit with her prosthetic device and gains proficiency walking. She says she is most excited to run and ride a bicycle when she returns to her family in Gaza. "We are honored to be a part of this transition in Hebatallah's life," says NCOPI's Stauffer. "She's a bright young lady with a bright future, and we're looking forward to seeing her through this process. It never gets old helping someone walk for the first time."

Upcoming AOPA Events

- Nov 12, 2014 *Gifts: Showing Appreciation Without Violating the Law*
Webinar Conference
[Learn more or register online here](#)
- Dec 10, 2014 *New Codes and Changes for 2015*
Webinar Conference
[Learn more or register online here](#)
- Jan 14, 2015 *Fill In the Blanks: VA Contracting and the New Template*
Webinar Conference
[Learn more or register online here](#)