



**American Orthotic &  
Prosthetic Association**

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## **AOPA 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014 Staff Report**

**To: AOPA Membership**

**From: Thomas F. Fise, Executive Director**

**Date: February 6, 2015**

**Subject: Interesting Times Ahead with a Republican Congress and a Democrat President It Raises the Question: More Gridlock? Or for O&P, Some Relief. Help Make it Relief by Attending the March 23-24, 2015 Policy Forum!**

Medicare will be an early focal point of the new Congress. Unless Congress acts by March 31, all Medicare physician payments will drop by 30%. If we want to get our message across before Congress passes a Medicare law, we need to jump in early – that is why AOPA has set the 2015 Policy Forum for March 23-25, one week before that Medicare deadline. Every year, despite the urging, reminders and never ending exhortation to attend the Policy Forum, guess what? About the same number of people attends every year. Year after year just about 100 professionals from the O&P world manage to arrange their schedule to participate.

What if there were 200, instead of 100 people, fanning across the halls of Congress, educating and delivering the O&P message? What if a large number of patients also joined the cause and there were 300 messengers of O&P? Would that change anything?

You bet it would!

### **AOPA Government Relations Update Legislative Activities**

If we measure the impact of the 2014 mid-term election on O&P in terms of how our O&P PAC contributions were deployed, then the news is very good. Your PAC supported 28 candidates—19 Republicans, and 9 Democrats, and we were right on 25 of those “bets,” or 90%! We made a strong commitment to new Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), and we are hopeful his election will be a big plus for O&P. And we also provided strong support to two new members of the U.S. Senate: Bill Cassidy (R-LA), a physician, a member of the House, a former Policy Forum Speaker; and Senator James Lankford (R-OK) who, in his capacity as Chair of the Oversight & Government Reform Health Subcommittee last year was very helpful in focusing attention on the perils of RAC audits and ALJ delays impacting O&P professionals. Probably the biggest loss for O&P resulting from mid-term election relates to diminished presence for two Senators, both Democrats, whom we have counted as friends. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), long a leading voice for the disability community and co-signer on a recent important letter of OTS orthotics, has retired, which also means we lost the lead sponsor of the Insurance Fairness to Amputees bill. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) is no longer the Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, so we lost another committed O&P advocate in a high place. His successor, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) has been sensitive to O&P issues, and his staff is both knowledgeable and responsive. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), who

championed our DoD outcomes research funding, won re-election and will be back, and we hope to continue to work with him, albeit in his new role as Minority Whip.

Our House champion, Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) won re-election, had our solid PAC support, and we are confident she will continue to draw focus on O&P issues. Both of the co-sponsors of our Medicare bill—Glenn Thompson (R-PA) and Mike Thompson (D-CA) won re-election, so we will continue to rely on their support as well as the 17 other House members supported by our PAC who returned for the new 114<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### **The Cromnibus Bill and O&P**

Great news for O&P outcomes research! The \$1.1 trillion combined continuing resolution and omnibus appropriations bill (the “cromnibus” bill) enacted December 13 to keep the government running includes a Department of Defense (DoD) section with an additional \$10 million for O&P outcomes research funding. This was also included in last year’s budget and we are especially grateful for AOPA lobbyist Catriona Macdonald, who has done such a spectacular job in transitioning this from a one-time item to being multi-year, and hopefully a mainstay of the federal budget! This is another good win for AOPA and its members. This news was especially impressive given how many cuts and other programs were squeezed out of the DoD portion of the bill.

Legislators also signaled that the efforts of AOPA and many others have been successful in raising very significant concern regarding the Medicare RAC audits, and the unconscionably long (and illegal) delays in allowing providers to access an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) hearing. Although there is no substantive fix included, an additional \$5 million was added to ALJ funding. Greater help, while by no means certain, could come in new Medicare legislation in 2015. The good news is that Congress did ‘put down a marker’ on their concern in the following language included in the bill:

*“Recovery Audit Contractors (RACs). There is concern that the CMS RAC program has created incentives for RACs to take overly aggressive actions. Information received from the Office of Medicare Hearings and Appeals (OMHA) indicates that about 50 percent of the estimated 43,000 appeals were fully or partially overturned at its level. The fiscal year 2015 budget request should include a plan with a timeline, goals, and measurable objectives to improve the RAC process. In addition, CMS is expected to work with Congress and stakeholders to identify challenges and additional reforms. Further, CMS should establish a systematic feedback process with the OMHA, CMS programs, and the RACs to prevent the appearance that RACs are selecting determinations to increase their fees. The CMS is urged to stay focused on improvements to all “operations” that prevent improper payments in lieu of chasing dollars after the fact.”*

### **Medicare Orthotics and Prosthetics Improvement Act of 2015**

For 2015 AOPA will build upon the strength on the prior legislative proposal, the O&P Medicare Improvement Act with the addition of some new provisions. In the past the bill has been focused on CMS’ failure in nearly 15 years to issue regulations under Section 427 of BIPA 2000, and it would have pushed CMS on the policy directives approved in prior Congresses, namely: no payment to anyone who is not properly licensed in O&P in a state that has a license provision, and in states that have not enacted an O&P licensure statute, no payment under Medicare to any provider who does not meet the accreditation standard set for the in the law.

These are priorities and still need to be accomplished, but the last year has seen many other provisions that also must be addressed for the future of O&P, and we have built those into the new 2015 Medicare O&P Improvement Act so that this year the bill will also include:

#### **Sec. 6. Orthotist’s and prosthetist’s clinical notes as part of the patient’s medical record.**

**Sec. 7. Distinguishing orthotists and prosthetists from suppliers of durable medical equipment and supplies.**

**Sec. 8. Retrospective non-hospital solutions to address problems in the Medicare appeals process.**

**Sec. 9. Maintaining due process and satisfying the ninety day statutory period for Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) decisions.**

**Sec. 10. Clarification about minimal self-adjustment for off-the-shelf orthotics.**

### **Coding and Reimbursement**

#### **Introducing “AOPA’s Take.” Where You Go.....When You need to Know!**

AOPA has launched a new blog site at [www.aopastake.org](http://www.aopastake.org). AOPA’s Take is a new method of communication from AOPA regarding news and information that is vital to the business of O&P. While AOPA has established lines of communication through traditional venues such as the *O&P Almanac* and the *SmartBrief* newsletter, *AOPA’s Take* will follow a different approach that will focus on specific issues, in a timely manner that are significant today, right now. Communication through AOPA’s Take will be immediate, keeping you informed of new information and developments as they happen.

AOPA has a long history of leading the way in ensuring that members of the O&P community have the tools to make sound decisions regarding the direction of their businesses. *AOPA’s Take* will continue this history by quickly becoming the best source for immediate access to breaking news that affects your O&P business.

*AOPA’s Take* is available at no charge to all members of the O&P community and subscribing is simple. Just enter your email address in the sidebar (or header on mobile devices) to subscribe and you will be sure to never miss an entry.

Welcome to AOPA’s Take.....Where you go when you need to know!

#### **New, Deleted, and Changed HCPCS Codes for 2015**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has released the new HCPCS codes for 2015. There were few changes to the codes that describe orthotics and prosthetics for 2015. Below is a breakdown of the new codes, code descriptor changes and code deletions. All changes are effective for claims with a date of service on or after January 1, 2015.

#### **New Codes**

Three new codes were added to the 2015 HCPCS code set.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
L3981	Upper extremity fracture orthosis, humeral, prefabricated, includes shoulder cap design, with or without joints, forearm section, may include soft interface, straps, includes fitting and adjustments
L6026	Transcarpal/metacarpal or partial hand disarticulation prosthesis, external power, self-suspended, inner socket with removable forearm section, electrodes and cables, two batteries, charger, myoelectric control of terminal device, excludes terminal device(s)
L7259	Electronic wrist rotator, any type

The new code L6026 appears to replace the deleted L6025; along with a key change in the descriptor. The L6026 official descriptor now clearly indicates that the code doesn’t include a terminal device.

The new code L7259 appears to replace the deleted codes L7260 and L7261, and removes any reference to any one specific product.

As a reminder, CMS also released two new “K” codes, which became effective on October 1, 2014, to describe off the shelf (OTS) versions of custom fitted knee orthoses described by L1843 and L1845. The two new K codes and their descriptors are as follows:

K0901 - Knee orthosis (KO), single upright, thigh and calf, with adjustable flexion and extension joint (unicentric or polycentric), medial-lateral and rotation control, with or without varus/valgus adjustment, prefabricated, off-the-shelf

K0902 - Knee orthosis (KO), double upright, thigh and calf, with adjustable flexion and extension joint (unicentric or polycentric), medial-lateral and rotation control, with or without varus/valgus adjustment, prefabricated, off-the-shelf

**Deleted Codes**

Three codes were deleted from the 2015 HCPCS code set.

Code	Descriptor
L6025	Transcarpal/metacarpal or partial hand disarticulation prosthesis, external power, self-suspended, inner socket with removable forearm section, electrodes and cables, two batteries, charger, myoelectric control of terminal device
L7260	Electronic wrist rotator, Otto Bock or equal
L7261	Electronic wrist rotator, for Utah arm

**Code Descriptor Changes**

One code had its official descriptor changed. The L7367 now includes the word “rechargeable”.

Code	New Descriptor	Old Descriptor
L7367	Lithium ion battery, <u>rechargeable</u> , replacement	Lithium ion battery, replacement

**2015 Medicare Fee Schedule Update**

The net increase in the 2015 Medicare O&P fee schedule is 1.5%, the result of a 2.1% consumer pricing index based increase and a productivity adjustment of 0.6%. As a reminder, Medicare sequestration remains in effect and all Medicare payments will be reduced by 2%. Sequestration as to Medicare was a one-time event and is not cumulative year to year however so O&P providers will receive a 1.5% net increase in reimbursement for the same services they provided in 2014.

**Medicare Proposed Rule on Prior Authorization for Certain Prosthetic Items**

The O&P community and their patients sent a significant message to CMS opposing the proposed Prior Authorization rule citing the flaws in this additional layer of bureaucracy. A total of 742 comments were sent by AOPA members and patients, expressing their concerns about the proposed rule.

As of the publication of this report, CMS has not issued a final rule regarding the implementation of prior authorization for certain prosthetic services. AOPA continues to follow this issue closely and will communicate any future developments to its members immediately.

**Off The Shelf Orthoses**

AOPA submitted formal comments on the CMS proposed rule that further clarifies the definition of the term “minimal self adjustment” as it relates to the provision of off the shelf orthoses. This proposed rule, part of the

larger proposed rule entitled: *Medicare Program; End-Stage Renal Disease Prospective Payment System, Quality Incentive Program, and Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies (ESRD Rule)* was published in the July 11, 2014 *Federal Register*. AOPA members were responsible for 378 comments in addition to 203 patient comments on this important rule.

In its comments, AOPA once again challenged the authority of CMS to use regulation to expand the definition of the term “minimal self adjustment” beyond the statutory definition that was originally published in section 427 of the Benefits Improvement Act. AOPA also challenged the addition of the term “substantial modification” into the policy requirements for providing custom fitted orthoses. AOPA’s comments also challenged the section of the proposed rule that essentially eliminates certified orthotic fitters and assistants from provision of anything other than OTS orthoses to Medicare patients. Finally, AOPA’s comments used Medicare data to illustrate that approximately 19% of Medicare patients who are initially fit with an OTS orthosis, ultimately require a custom fit or fabricated orthosis in order to meet their medical needs.

On October 14, 2014 Senators Grassley (R-IA) and Harkin (D-IA) at AOPA’s behest wrote CMS Administrator Marilyn Tavenner expressing their concerns about the expanded definition saying, “As a result of this expansion from the statutory definition, we are concerned about the quality of care that beneficiaries will receive. Under CMS’s definition, beneficiaries are at risk of receiving orthotic devices without the services that are necessary to ensure that these devices provide proper bracing, which can result in serious beneficiary harm.”

On October 31, 2014, CMS released the final ESRD rule but decided not to implement any of the proposed changes relating to OTS orthotics including the definition of the term “minimal self adjustment” as it relates to the provision of OTS orthoses. In addition, CMS decided not to implement the provisions of the proposed rule that would prevent certified orthotic fitters and assistants, operating within their defined scope of practice, from providing custom fitted orthoses. Many would question the motives of an agency which issues a proposed rule and which prompts a huge response from virtually all the stakeholders and rather than processing those comments and incorporating them into a final rule, essentially shut down a process, the outcome of which they don’t like by essentially saying “Never mind.”

While AOPA efforts seem to have borne fruit in this scenario, this issue will most likely be addressed in future rulemaking. AOPA will maintain a diligent watch on any federal regulations that misinterpret the statutory definition of the term minimal self adjustment and will respond accordingly.

#### **AOPA Participation on DME MAC Advisory Councils**

AOPA continues to actively participate on each of the four DME MAC Advisory Councils. These groups meet on a regular basis with representatives of the four DME MACs to discuss provider issues. AOPA has been able to create and maintain open lines of communication with Medicare contractors as a result of participation on the advisory councils.

### **Policy Forum**

Your colleagues hope to see you, March 23-25, 2015 at the Annual Policy Forum for one of the most important events of the year in Washington, DC, at the Renaissance Hotel.

The Policy Forum dates are likely to closely coincide with one of the major Medicare legislative actions as Congress will be forced by existing law to address a solution to the current physician reimbursement schedule known as the “Doc Fix” or physician fees may drop more than thirty percent. It’s a golden opportunity to push for inclusion of O&P specific relief on RAC audits, ALJ delays, separation of O&P from DME and other critical issues affecting patients served by AOPA’s membership.

Your Congressional appointments will be organized by AOPA staff and lobbyists and materials will be provided to further educate Congress on O&P issues. You will be well prepared to meet with your member of Congress

during day 1 and at breakfast on day 2. Following breakfast on day 2 each state delegation will go on appointments together as time allows. Last year more than 325 appointments were scheduled for those attending.

Why should you attend? Educate your lawmakers on the issues that are important to YOU:

1. Recognition of the Orthotist/Prosthetist's notes as part of the medical record
2. RAC /Medicare Contractor audit practices that harm honest providers and don't prevent fraud
3. Preventing the Expansion of the Off-the-Shelf Orthoses Category and Competitive Bidding
4. Equitable reimbursement for medically necessary services
5. The value of O&P professionals as allied health providers, and enforcing rules limiting Medicare reimbursement to licensed and/or accredited facilities-certified professionals
6. How O&P care can save Medicare money
7. Distinguish O&P from DME – endorse legislation that recognizes that you are more than a supplier

To maximize your time away from the office, the Policy Forum will offer you additional learning opportunities on important and pertinent topics. To make this experience even more beneficial, you can customize your schedule and register for the additional modules you are most interested in.

More Information: <http://www.aopanet.org/2015/01/save-the-date-for-the-2015-policy-forum/>

Registration: <https://aopa.wufoo.com/forms/2015-policy-forum-registration/>

Hotel Reservation: <https://aws.passkey.com/g/45902216>

Complete Schedule:

### **Policy Forum Schedule Overview**

#### **Monday, March 23, 2015 – Day 1**

12 Noon - O&P PAC Fundraiser Luncheon (contribution required)

12:45 – 4:40 PM - Briefings and updates from Senators and Representatives, the AOPA lobbying team, and other experts on critical issues confronting the O&P community

4:45 – 5:45 PM - O&P PAC Fundraiser Reception (contribution required)

6:30 PM - Reception and Dinner (included)

#### **Tuesday, March 24, 2015 – Day 2**

7:00 AM - O&P PAC Fundraiser Breakfast (contribution required)

7:30 AM - Breakfast, Review of Talking Points and a Mock Congressional Visit

8:00 AM – 4:00 PM - Congressional Appointments

4:00 – 4:30 PM - Debriefing Session

5:00 – 8:00 PM - Module 1 – Optional Add-on program. AOPA extended educational modules: These high-level executive meetings will provide the business information and Washington insider focus you need to continue to run your highly successful business. (Includes Dinner)

- Competitive Bidding—Winners, Losers and Determining if You Want to Play
- A Surgeon's Perspective on O&P
- With Wal-Mart as a Health Insurer, and Amazon Delivering Orthotic Braces within four hours, Who are your Friends and Who are your Enemies—A Fresh Look at O&P Partners and Competitors

#### **Wednesday, March 25, 2015 – Day 3**

8:30 AM – 1:00 PM - Module 2 – Optional Add-on program. AOPA extended educational modules, high-level executive meetings will provide the business information and Washington insider focus you need to run your highly successful business.

1. Coding and Reimbursement Segment –
  - a. Primer: Steps You Can Take to Avoid RAC/Pre-Payment Audits and Succeed If You Get Them
  - b. Current Impact of OTS orthotic Codes on Your Business: A Review of Recent Audit Results
  - c. Turning Challenges into Opportunities: Strategies to Increase Revenue without Breaking the Rules

2. FDA and Your O&P Business
3. Prosthetics & Orthotics, Five Year Fast Forward: Getting the Answers Needed to Preserve and Grow vs. De-Valuing the Core of O&P

Questions? Contact AOPA Headquarters at [info@AOPAnet.org](mailto:info@AOPAnet.org) or (571) 431-0808

## O&P PAC Update

### **2014 O&P PAC Supporters**

As a reminder, The O&P PAC is the political action committee representing you and the O&P community on Capitol Hill and provides you with a means of increasing the visibility and recognition of orthotic and prosthetic services among legislators. It allows individuals to unite and pool their resources to support candidates for federal office who understand the crucial role of O&P in the health care delivery system.

Thanks to the following individuals for their contributions to the O&P PAC in 2014. This list covers the period from January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014. If we missed your name please accept our apologies, and any contributions made or received after December 31, 2014 will be published in the next quarterly staff report.

#### **PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE (\$1,000 \$5,000)**

Michael Allen, CPO, FAAOP  
 Ryan Arbogast  
 Maynard Carkhuff  
 Charles H. Dankmeyer, Jr., CPO  
 Thomas DiBello, CO, LO, FAAOP  
 Rick Fleetwood, MPA  
 Thomas Kirk, Ph.D.  
 Alfred Ritter, CPO, FAAOP  
 Ronald Manganiello  
 Ann Mantelmacher  
 John Roberts, CPO  
 Frank Snell, CPO, LPO, FAAOP  
 Bernie Veldman, CO

#### **SENATOR'S TABLE ( \$500 - \$999)**

Kel Bergmann, CPO  
 Frank Bostock, CO  
 James Campbell, Ph.D., CO, FAAOP  
 J. Martin Carlson, CP  
 Richard Gingras, CPO  
 Marbee Gingras,  
 Elizabeth Ginzler, CPO, LPO  
 William Gustavson,  
 Jon Leimkuehler, CPO, FAAOP  
 Paul Prusakowski, CPO  
 Walter Racette, CPO  
 Bradley Ruhl,  
 Ronald Snell, CP  
 Gordon Stevens, CPO, LPO  
 Frank Vero, CPO

John Wall, PT, CPO, FAAOP  
 Ashlie White,  
 Eddie White, CP

#### **CHAIRMAN'S TABLE (\$100 - \$499)**

John Allen, CPO  
 Rudolf Becker, III  
 James Bernardino, CPO  
 Michael Burton  
 Robin Burton  
 Erin Cammaratta  
 Don DeBolt  
 Ted Drygas, CPO  
 Jim Fitzpatrick  
 Steven Foy, CPO  
 Michael Fulkerson, MSHA  
 Susan Guerra, RN, CFO  
 David Johnson, CO  
 Steven Kelly  
 Steven King  
 William Kitchens, CO  
 Teri Kuffel ,Esq.  
 Alan Lett, CPO  
 Sam Liang, MBA  
 Anita Liberman-Lamphear, MA  
 James Liston, CP, FAAOP  
 Pam Lupo, CO  
 Jeff Lutz, CPO  
 Joe Martin, COO  
 Brad Mattear, CPA, Cfo  
 Wendy Miller, BOCO, CDME  
 Jonathan Naft, CPO  
 Chris Nolan,

Michael Oros, CPO, LPO  
 J. Curt Patton, III, BOCPO, CP  
 Ricardo Ramos, CP, C.Ped., LP  
 Tonja Randolph  
 Rick Riley  
 Andreas Schultz  
 Donald Shurr, CPO, PT  
 C. William Teague, CP  
 James Weber, MBA  
 Pam Young  
 Claudia Zacharias, MBA, CAE

#### **1917 Club (Up to \$99)**

Dale Anderson, CPO  
 Michael Angelico  
 Vincent Benenati, BOCO, CCO  
 Luke Brewer, CPO  
 Scott Buser  
 Keith Capps  
 Vinny DeCataldo, BOCP, BOCO  
 Mark Degroff  
 Susi Ebersbach  
 Kristin Faircloth, CPO  
 Arlene Gillis  
 Melody Giraldo, CPO  
 Paul Gudonis, MBA  
 Warren Hagen, CO, BOCO, C.Ped, PTA  
 Denise Hoffman  
 Neal James  
 Rosie Jovane  
 Brian Kasprovicz, CO  
 Jim Kingsley  
 Eileen Levis  
 Carlo Luetto

Mark McDonald, CPO  
Larry Powers, CP  
Chrissy Thomas

Terry Thompson, CO  
Robert Tillges, CPO, FAAOP  
Steve Tillges, CPO

Mike Vanek, COA, CTPO  
Jeff Wensman, CPO

**Special Support Group** – Each year, the O&P PAC organizes fundraising events for members of Congress who have been supportive of O&P. For each event AOPA members make a personal contribution to the member's campaign and spend time with the member talking about a variety of issues including health care and O&P issues. These events are a unique way to share O&P concerns, get to know a member of Congress, and have been very successful in getting Congress to understand O&P concerns.

We would like to thank those individuals who in 2014 have donated directly to a candidate's fundraiser. This list covers the period from January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014. If we missed your name please accept our apologies, and any contributions made or received after December 31, 2014 will be published in the next quarterly staff report

Daniel Bastian CP  
Rudolf Becker, III  
Kel Bergmann, CPO  
Jim Cahill  
Jim Campbell, PhD, CO, FAAOP  
Maynard Carkhuff  
J. Martin Carlson, CP  
Rikki Cheney  
Jeff Collins, CPA  
Glenn Crumpton, CPO  
Charles H. Dankmeyer, Jr., CPO  
Don DeBolt  
Mitchell Dobson, CPO, FAAOP  
Susi Ebersbach  
Jeff Erenstone, CPO  
Mike Fenner, CP, BOCPO, LPO  
Thomas Fise, JD  
Rick Fleetwood, MPA  
Elizabeth Ginzler, CPO, LPO

John Horne, CPO, C.Ped  
Frank Ikerd  
Lori Jack  
Paul Johnston, CP, BOCPO, C.Ped  
James Kaiser, CP, LP  
Jim Kingsley  
Thomas Kirk, Ph.D.  
Alfred Kritter, CPO, FAAOP  
Eileen Levis  
Anita Liberman-Lamphear, MA  
Tom Loposer, CO, BOCO, BOCPO  
Ronald Manganiello,  
Dave McGill  
Kenneth Meier, CPO, FAAOP  
Michael Oros, CPO, LPO  
Jeffrey Parsons, CO  
Matt Perkins, CFO  
Ricardo Ramos, CP, C.Ped, LP  
Rick Riley

Paula Rogerson-Doherty  
Bradley Ruhl  
Kurt Schlau, CP  
Scott Schneider  
Donald Shurr, CPO, PT  
Chris Snell  
Frank Snell, CPO, FAAOP  
William Snell, CPO  
Gordon Stevens, CPO, LPO  
Peter Thomas, Esq.  
Ted Trower, CPO, FAAOP  
John Tyo, BOCPO, CP  
Frank Vero, CPO  
James Weber MBA  
Elliot Weintrob, CPO  
Lisa Williams - Guichet  
Pam Young  
James Young, Jr., CP, LP, FAAOP  
Claudia Zacharias, MBA,

## **AOPA's Communications Tools – Telling Members What's Going On**

### **Online Communications**

#### **Constant Contact**

AOPA continues to keep members informed of AOPA events and breaking news with Constant Contact emailing service. In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2014, we have used email to inform members about *AOPA's Take*, our new blog available to all O&P community members; our coding and billing seminars; the 2015 Policy Forum; exhibit and presentation opportunities at the 2015 AOPA National Assembly; Mobility Saves news; an opportunity to save with our insurance partner Cailor Fleming; and other topics of interest.

We also launched the "In Case you Missed It" email in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, to recap all the important stories from the prior month that AOPA has shared with members. Three emails have been sent out, with an open rate between 17-20%.

#### **Facebook**

AOPA's Facebook account, [www.facebook.com/AmericanOandP](http://www.facebook.com/AmericanOandP), has a total of 3,227 followers, grown from 2,658 followers at the end of quarter 3. We continue to interact with our followers by sharing human interest and

relevant news stories, AOPA events and legislative actions, member news, and other content that may appeal to our audience, which is comprised of practitioners, students, O&P office staff, patients, O&P organizations and companies, and others interested in O&P.

### **Twitter**

The AOPA Twitter account, @AmericanOandP, has 2237 followers, up from 2089 at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Using short URL's and quick links has been highly useful on Twitter to promote awareness of AOPA events and other topics of interest.

### **The Website**

Nearly 11,000 users visited the AOPAnet.org website during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, with the most commonly visited pages including the dues renewal page, the job board, the digital edition of the *O&P Almanac* and accompanying quizzes.

### **O&P Almanac**

The fourth quarter of 2014 for the *O&P Almanac* had cover stories that highlighted O&P advocacy on the state level, issues surrounding prosthetic 3-D printing, and offered an exclusive on the first US Osseointegration patient in the US. Members continue to visit the digital edition of the magazine on AOPA's website and take advantage of the continuing education credits offered for the monthly Reimbursement Page and quarterly Compliance Quarter features.

### **Mobility Saves**

The "Mobility Saves" public relations campaign that was launched earlier in 2014 has continued to build momentum and spread the word that Mobility Saves Lives and Money. The website [www.MobilitySaves.org](http://www.MobilitySaves.org) drew in nearly 2000 users over the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, who could then learn more about the study by Dobson-DaVanzo that Mobility Saves is based on, that proves that O&P care is cost-effective. Once on the website, visitors can also download resources to share, watch testimonials from real O&P patients, read the latest news, and check the ticking calculator on how much Medicare has saved this year by providing O&P care.

The Mobility Saves social media presence has grown to over 4,500 likes on Facebook, 80 Twitter followers, and 80 LinkedIn followers. The highest reaching post on Mobility Saves was seen by nearly 29,000 users, earned 257 likes, and was shared 7 times.

The Mobility Saves campaign has been partnering with 16 outside organizations to spread the word to O&P practitioners, payers, and patients. These organizations have shared, liked, and retweeted our social media posts, to get the Mobility Saves message out to their audiences. The Amputee Coalition is also promoting the campaign in Limbline, their monthly e-newsletter and inMotion, their bi-monthly print magazine.

## **2014 Wrap Up**

Legislative and regulatory advocacy has always been a top priority for AOPA. Never before have our efforts demanded such an incredible amount of resources, in working to achieve results for the O&P industry.

Each year we summarize the most important legislative and regulatory actions conducted on your behalf over the previous year. This year's annual summary, *21 Important Things AOPA Has Done for Its Members in 2014*, sent to all AOPA members, touches on the most significant accomplishments benefitting the O&P industry. These accomplishments are the direct result of *your AOPA membership dues investment*. Here is just a sampling of those 21 important things done for you:

- 31 Congressional Representatives signed onto a letter to the Secretary of HHS conveying the harm brought to O&P providers by the 2-3 year ALJ appeal delays that are in violation of the statutory appeals requirement of 90 days. The letter requested that CMS suspend audits until timely hearings were restored.
- Submitted statements to four Congressional Committee hearings proposing constructive ways to address fraud, waste and abuse of the Medicare System, as alternatives to the current RAC program which harms honest providers and has created a massive backlog of appeals at the ALJ level.
- Introduction of H.R. 5083: The Medicare DMEPOS Audit Improvement and Reform (AIR) Act of 2014 by Rep. Ellmers (R-NC), which, if enacted, would recognize documentation by orthotists and prosthetists as

part of the medical record, and separate O&P from DME for reporting appeals information and calculating error rates.

- Launched Mobility Saves Lives and Money, the public relations campaign to promote the cost-effectiveness study proving that O&P intervention saves money for payers. The Dobson-DaVanzo research study using Medicare data demonstrates that patients who receive timely O&P intervention experienced better health outcomes and reduced costs to Medicare, compared to patients with the same diagnoses who did not receive O&P care.
- Rallied AOPA members and patients to submit hundreds of comments to CMS opposing two proposed rules: the first requiring prior authorization on most prosthetic claims, because payment was not guaranteed nor were RAC audits eliminated on these claims; and the second proposed rule, opposing the Off-the-Shelf orthotics expanded definition and limitation on providers of custom orthotics.
- Secured \$10 million in the Department of Defense budget to support new outcomes research initiatives on O&P topics.

## 2105 AOPA National Assembly

The AOPA National Assembly Planning Committee has issued a call for papers for the 98<sup>th</sup> Annual AOPA National Assembly to be held October 7-10, 2015 in San Antonio, Texas. Share your expertise and advance your career by being part of the country's oldest and largest meeting for the orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic profession.

- Papers are being accepted for podium, poster and/or symposium sessions for each of the five concurrent education tracks (orthotic, prosthetic, pedorthic, technician, and business). For more information or to submit a paper <http://www.aopanet.org/education/2015-assembly/present/>
- All submissions must be submitted electronically.
- The submission deadline is March 10, 2015.
- Before submitting a paper, please review the model abstract for the abstract format which also provides additional information about the submission process. The model abstract is available <http://www.aopanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2015-Assembly-Model-Abstract.pdf>

The meeting will be held at the Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center located in the heart of San Antonio on the River Walk. San Antonio's River Walk is one of the most visited sites in Texas, providing scenic pathways and waterways for the city's cultural and historic sites, as well as a picturesque link between restaurants, hotels and shops. It gently winds through the city center, providing millions of visitors each year with easy access to the city's cultural hot spots, historic sites and other attractions.

To get the most of your trip to San Antonio, we have provided four easy steps to help you learn more about what interests you most.

1. Go to [VisitSanAntonio.com](http://VisitSanAntonio.com) to sign up for San Antonio's official newsletter and learn more about what interests you most. Whether it is the Arts, Music, Festivals, Family, Local Attractions or Shopping you will find a calendar of events and local information at [VisitSanAntonio.com](http://VisitSanAntonio.com)
2. Request a Free Visitors Guide — Explore arts and culture and learn about local attractions and things to do. [Request your guide](#) here.
3. [Download SAVE coupons](#) from the San Antonio Vacation Experience. Get exclusive deals and discounts.
4. Download a copy of the [River Walk map](#) to see all the great places you will want to visit within walking distance to the convention center.

### For general information about the Assembly

**Visit:** <http://www.aopanet.org/education/2015-assembly/>

**Email:** [Assembly@AOPAnet.org](mailto:Assembly@AOPAnet.org)

**Contact:** Tina Moran at (571) 431-0808.

## AOPAversity Educational Events

In August of 2014 the ever popular monthly Audio Conferences were converted into webinars to help you get the most out of your learning experience. All Webinars begin at 1:00 PM Eastern on the second Wednesday of each month. The Webinars are \$99 each for members and \$199 for non-members. Members can sign up for the entire 2015 series for only \$990 and get two Free. Sign up at [www.AOPAnet.org](http://www.AOPAnet.org). Mid-year sign ups for the entire series receive a recorded version of sessions missed.

The webinars are a great way to boost employee morale (by providing monthly staff education event), provide needed education and CE Credits.\*

### The 2015 Schedule

January 14	Fill In the Blanks: VA Contracting and the New Template
February 11	Find Success: Tips, Strategies and Understanding the Appeals Process
March 11	Who Gets the Bill: A Complete Look at Medicare Inpatient Billing
April 8	Lower Limb Prostheses Policy: Learn the Policy Inside and Out
May 13	The New Player in Town: Understand How the RAC Contract Works
June 10	Stay Out of Trouble: Building a Medicare Approved Compliance Plan
July 8	Who's on First? Medicare as a Secondary Payer
August 12	OTS vs. Custom Fit: The True Story
September 9	Prior Authorization, How Does it Work
October 14	Understanding the LSO/TLSO Policy
November 11	How to Make a Good Impression: Marketing Yourself to Your Referrals
December 9	Bringing in the New Year: New Codes and Changes for 2016

*\*Includes an unlimited number of participants per telephone line. Those needing credit can earn 1.5 Business CEs each by returning the quiz within 30 days and scoring at least 80%. All webinars begin at 1 p.m. Eastern.*

### AOPA Mastering Medicare: Essential Coding and Billing Techniques Seminar

AOPA experts provide the most up-to-date information to help O&P Practitioners and office billing staff learn how to code complex devices, including repairs and adjustments, through interactive discussions with AOPA experts, your colleagues, and much more. Meant for both practitioners and office staff, this advanced two-day event will feature breakout sessions for these two groups, to ensure concentration on material appropriate to each group. The registration rate is \$525 per attendee for members, and \$725 for non-members. For additional attendees from the same office, a discount is offered: \$475 for members, and \$675 for non-members.

1. Embassy Suites Savannah | February 9-10 | Savannah, GA
2. Grand Hyatt Seattle | April 13-14 | Seattle, WA
3. Hampton Inn Philadelphia Center City-Convention Center | July 13-14 | Philadelphia, PA
4. The Flamingo | November 9-10 | Las Vegas, NV

Learn more at <http://www.aopanet.org/education/coding-billing-seminar/>

### Futures Leadership Conference

A major 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014 activity that played out in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2015 was an intense and a unique planning exercise to hit just the right notes at the first ever AOPA leadership conference focused on the future – and how we can be prepared. The January 9-11, 2015 conference turned out to be a huge success with twice as many participants than originally planned. More details will be reported in the 2015 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Staff Report but for now suffice to say that the conference scored rave reviews and underscored the crying need for more, much more, comparative and cost effectiveness research. AOPA's Board met a week later and approved funding for four major projects in response and to further O&P's ability to prove our value.

## And Speaking of Research

AOPA recognized the woeful lack of solid research years ago and helped create the Center for O&P Learning and Outcomes/Evidence Based Practice (COPL) whose Board of Directors is populated by one designated representative by the eight major organizations in the O&P space. COPL has each year recommended the award of small pilot grant research projects, initially \$7,500 and now \$15,000 each which have been funded by AOPA. Usually three or four proposed research projects are funded each year. COPL additionally participated in recommending the research awards for comparative effectiveness studies on the comparative effectiveness of advanced prosthetic feet as compared to conventional technologies and between Microprocessor Controlled and Non-microprocessor Controlled Prosthetic Knees. These studies were jointly funded by AOPA and several manufacturers.

Another significant study on the cost effectiveness of timely O&P intervention was commissioned by the Amputee Coalition and funded by AOPA. This has been a landmark study because for the first time using Medicare's own data the results proved that orthotic and prosthetic care, despite higher initial cost, actually saved money for the Medicare program.

This study and several others are now available exclusively to AOPA members on AOPA's website. Your dues investment over the years has helped finance more than one million dollars in research that will further enhance the ability of the O&P community to continue as a relevant and respected provider of services for this with limb loss or limb impairment. You can access this research and other data at:

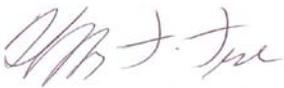
<http://www.aopanet.org/valuable-members-only-compendium-of-data-regarding-pr>

## We Really Need You in 2015

We are gearing up for an exciting year ahead and don't want you to miss out on any part of it. For the first time, AOPA sent an O&P calendar to help members keep track of all the important AOPA happenings in the year ahead. The calendar also includes an AOPA staff directory, bookstore discount coupons and important web addresses that you might find useful. If you did not receive a copy and would like one sent to your office, contact Betty Leppin at [bleppin@aopanet.org](mailto:bleppin@aopanet.org).

2015 AOPA Membership renewal notices were mailed in November. If you are one of the 90% who have replied - thank you! If you haven't acted on your renewal notice yet for 2015, you can renew online at [www.AOPAnet.org](http://www.AOPAnet.org) to prevent any disruption to your valuable benefits. Renew before February 13<sup>th</sup> to continue access to our coding and billing experts, members-only [LCodeSearch.com](http://LCodeSearch.com), UPS discounts, free online education, super bank card processing rates and member pricing on educational products, seminars, and the 2015 National Assembly, October 7-10, in unique and memorable San Antonio.

Sincerely,



Thomas F. Fise, JD  
Executive Director