AOPA 4th Quarter 2017 Staff Report

To: AOPA Membership
From: Thomas F. Fise, Executive Director
Date: January 5, 2018

Subject: A year to remember for many things!

AOPA had a successful 2017, celebrating 100 years since the association’s founding! AOPA introduced the new member benefit - the Co-OP, held the record-setting World Congress in Las Vegas, celebrated our first Healthcare Compliance and Ethics Week, launched Orthotics 2020, shared the RAND Study on the Economic Value of Advanced Transfemoral Prosthetics and the new Dobson-DaVanzo cost-effectiveness research, and announced a new affinity apparel program, among other things. We watched the broader healthcare debate where a Republican majority Congress failed to repeal the Affordable Care Act but later eliminated the individual mandate in the recently passed tax bill. We saw several CMS and VA proposals that would harm patients and providers, and the withdrawal of the Qualified Provider rule. AOPA has been advocating for you every step of the way and will continue to fight in 2018.

2018 AOPA Assembly
Save the Date! The 2018 AOPA Assembly will be held September 26-29 in Vancouver, BC, Canada—one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Enjoy the breathtaking scenery while you network, learn and advance your career. For those who have never had a chance to visit this beautiful city—don’t miss out on a prime opportunity! For those who have been to Vancouver, you already know what a spectacular city Vancouver truly is.

AOPA is known for its regulatory expertise, research and advocacy. That is why top clinicians, business owners, managers and manufacturers from around the world choose AOPA as their first choice in meetings. Take advantage of pre-Assembly education and post show vacations, as well as everything in between. AOPA has partnered with AlaskaBySea to provide an affordable pre-show Alaska cruise.

Present at the Assembly: AOPA is seeking high-quality educational and research content for the 2018 AOPA Assembly, September 26-29 in Vancouver, BC, Canada. All submissions are due by March 1, 2018.

Your submissions will set the stage for a broad curriculum of high-value clinical and scientific offerings at the National Assembly. AOPA is accepting these topics: Clinical Free Papers, Technician Program, Symposia/instructional course, Business Education, and Pedorthic Program. Submit your paper at bit.ly/present2018.

Exhibit at this important event:
- 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 the North America for the orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic profession.
- Much more!

For information about exhibiting, contact Kelly O’Neill at koneill@AOPAnet.org.

**Government Affairs and Legislative Round Up**

**AOPA Submits Comments Regarding CMS’ Proposed Changes to DMEPOS Quality Standards Related to Diabetic Inserts**

On December 11, AOPA submitted formal comments on CMS’ proposed change to the DMEPOS Quality Standards that would expand the definition of the term “molded to patient model” to include custom fabricated diabetic inserts that are fabricated using a virtual or digital model of the patient’s foot and a direct milling process. Earlier this year, the DME MACs published a coding bulletin that indicated that because direct milled inserts were not molded over a positive model of the patient’s foot, they could not be billed using HCPCS code A5513 and would have to be billed using A9270 which is a statutorily non-covered service.

The proposed change to the DMEPOS Quality Standards creates a pathway for Medicare coverage for direct milled inserts but a subsequent frequently asked questions (FAQ) document published by CMS indicates that direct milled inserts cannot be billed using A5513 and that reimbursement for inserts fabricated this way will be reduced by approximately 14%.

AOPA undertook a multi-faceted agency, Hill and patient-centered strategy to counter this dysfunctional outcome. The included AOPA comments which supported the proposed change to the DMEPOS Quality Standards but challenged the CMS proposal to arbitrarily reduce the reimbursement rate for direct milled inserts. AOPA believes that the manner of fabrication is irrelevant, that it is FDA, not CMS, to which Congress authorized to scrutinize manufacturing processes, and that the proposed change to the DMEPOS Quality Standards should allow direct milled inserts to be properly billed using A5513. AOPA’s comments may be viewed on the AOPA website at bit.ly/5513comments.

In addition to its independent comments, AOPA joined the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) in expressing its mutual concern regarding the CMS opinion that direct milled, custom fabricated inserts do not meet the requirements for classification under A5513 and also was party to the comments submitted by the O&P Alliance.

**AOPA Submits Comments on the CMS Proposed Rule That Would Provide States with Additional Flexibility in Defining Essential Health Benefits**

On November 2, 2017, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) published a proposed rule in the Federal Register entitled “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; HHS Notice of Benefit and Payment Parameters for 2019.” Among the provisions in the proposed rule is a section that would provide individual states with increased flexibility in defining essential health benefits (EHB) for purposes of establishing benchmark plans required by the Affordable Care Act.
AOPA submitted official comments on the proposed rule on November 27, 2017. Our comments reflected AOPA’s consistent position that orthoses and prostheses must remain essential health benefits and any action by CMS that restricts or reduces access to O&P services is not in the best interest of quality patient care. AOPA’s comments may be accessed on the AOPA website at bit.ly/ehbcomments.

**AOPA Submits Comments on AHRQ Systematic Review Draft Report**

In late October 2017, the Agency for Healthcare Quality Research (AHRQ), in conjunction with a contractor known as an Evidence-based Practice Center (EPC), released a draft report on its systematic review of current scientific literature that address the use of lower limb prostheses in the United States. This systematic review has been perceived as being an integral part of the work of the Interagency workgroup dated to the 2015 ill-conceived proposal to modify the LCD for lower limb prosthesis.

AOPA reviewed the draft report published by the EPC and unfortunately did not agree with much in the conclusions, particularly its final abstract conclusion that “there is not evidence to support the selection of specific components for patient subgroups to maximize ambulation, function, and quality of life or to minimize abandonment or limited use.” AOPA believes that there is clear evidence, apparently not considered by AHRQ or its contractor to support specific components for patient subgroups for maximizing favorable patient outcomes. The draft systematic review did not consider recent research by the RAND Corporation and the health economics firm Dobson DaVanzo that specifically studied both the clinical and cost effectiveness of the provision of higher technology prosthetic limbs but instead focused on the number of unused abandoned prostheses. In addition, the systematic review either ignored or dismissed the vast majority of research identified by AOPA in its December 2016 comments regarding the key questions that would be explored in the systematic review.

AOPA has submitted extensive comments to the AHRQ urging them to continue work on its systematic review and to consider valuable studies such as the RAND study and the Dobson DaVanzo study in their final report. AOPA’s comments may be accessed on the AOPA website at bit.ly/ahrqcomments.

**AOPA Responds to Veterans Administration Proposed Rule Affecting Provider Choice**

The October 16, 2017 Federal Register included a proposed rule published by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that intends to “reorganize and update the current regulations related to prosthetic and rehabilitative items, primarily to clarify eligibility for prosthetic and other rehabilitative items and services, and to define the types of items and services available to eligible veterans.”

There is a provision in the proposed rule that significantly threatens longstanding VA policy that allows the veteran to decide whether they receive O&P services directly from the VA or from a VA contracted provider. The proposed language states the following:

> “VA will determine whether VA or a VA-authorized vendor will furnish authorized items and services under § 17.3230 to eligible veterans. When VA has the capacity or inventory, VA directly provides items and services to veterans. However, VA also may use, on a case-by-case basis, VA authorized vendors to provide greater access, lower cost, and/or a wider range of items and services. We would clarify in regulation that this administrative business decision is made solely by VA to eliminate any possible confusion as to whether a veteran has a right to request items or services generally, or to request specific items or services from a provider other than VA, and to clarify for the benefit of VA-authorized vendors that VA retains this discretion as part of our duty to administer this program in a legally sufficient, fiscally responsible manner.”

This language, if finalized, is in direct conflict with the current VA policy as well as the Veteran’s Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 and will significantly restrict the ability of a veteran to see the VA contracted provider of their choice for prosthetic and orthotic care. AOPA sought, received, and submitted
to VA a legal opinion highlighting the longstanding legal commitment by VA to permit a large number of Vets to exercise the choice for private sector care. AOPA comments on the proposed rule which were due on December 15, 2017 and may be accessed on the AOPA website at bit.ly/vaissue.

AOPA provided a portal for members to submit comments through AOPAvotes (now closed); more than 250 members participated. AOPA also published an ad in Politico, a newspaper of legislative and political news that is delivered to Congress and the White House, and read by think tanks, federal agencies, etc and a large number of legislators, to highlight the inconsistency of the proposal with the concept of Veterans choice. The ad may be viewed at the same link as above.

**CMS Expands the Target, Probe, and Educate Audit Program**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have expanded a program aimed at narrowing the focus of pre-payment audits performed by Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs). The program, known as Target, Probe, and Educate (TPE), has been expanded to all MACs, nationwide and replaces all previous pre-payment audit programs at the DME MACs.

The purpose of the TPE program, as stated by CMS, is to focus on specific suppliers within a benefit category selected for review that have historically high claim error rates or higher than normal utilization patterns. The TPE program will consist of up to 3 rounds of pre-payment review and supplier specific education based on the results of the review. Suppliers selected for the TPE program will receive a notification letter followed by a sample of 20 to 40 claims that have been selected for audit. Once the supplier submits the requested documentation, the audit will take place and an error rate will be established. The supplier will then have a dedicated education session with the medical review staff to discuss strategies to improve their claim submission process. If the supplier’s success rate is not adequate, up to 2 additional rounds of audit and education will take place. If, during any of the three rounds of the TPE process, the supplier’s success rate is deemed adequate, the supplier will be removed from the TPE program for up to one year.

**RAC Audit Update**

The national DMEPOS, Home Health, and Hospice RAC contractor, Performant, was authorized by CMS to begin its audit activity and began auditing claims in March.

Currently the following O&P items/services are listed under the “approved issues on the Performant website and are eligible to be audited: Complex Review of Spinal Orthoses: L0452, L0480, L0482, L0484, L0486, L0629, L0632, L0634, L0636, L0638, L0640, A9270


**CMS Withdraws BIPA 427 Proposed Rule**

On October 3, 2017, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced that it has withdrawn the proposed rule that represented the first step in creating regulations that would implement the qualified provider provisions for prostheses and custom fabricated orthoses legislated in section 427 of the Benefits Improvement and Protection Act of 2000 (BIPA).

According to the notice published by CMS the proposed rule was withdrawn due to “the cost and time burdens that the proposed rule would create for many providers and suppliers, particularly the cost and burden for those providers and suppliers that are small businesses, and the complexity of the issues raised in the detailed public comments.” CMS indicated that they received over 5,000 public comments regarding the proposed rule.
AOPA was disappointed that CMS decided to withdraw the proposed rule that would finally create regulations to implement a law that was passed more than 17 years ago. The withdrawal of the proposed rule once again exposes the Medicare population to no regulation regarding what qualifications are required to provide custom orthotic and prosthetic services. While the proposed rule was far from perfect, as AOPA expressed in its public comments that were submitted to CMS, AOPA believed that issues that were of significant concern to several provider groups, who viewed the proposed rule as a threat to their ability to continue to provide services within their scope of practice, could have been addressed through changes to the final rule rather than through the complete withdrawal of the proposed rule.

The combination of the recent administration change, including the new administration’s philosophy to reduce overall regulatory burden on businesses, the significant opposition from several high profile provider groups, and the restrictive language that would significantly limit certain providers from continuing to provided custom orthoses and prostheses appear to have led directly to the demise and subsequent withdrawal of the proposed rule.

AOPA will continue to make every effort to ensure that all recipients of O&P care receive that care from folks who have been properly educated and trained in the fabrication, fit, and delivery of orthotic and prosthetic devices.

**AOPA Healthcare Compliance and Ethics Week**
Over 100 AOPA members participated in a very successful AOPA Healthcare Compliance and Ethics Week which was held from November 5-11, 2017. The success of this inaugural event exceeded AOPA’s expectations and next year’s Healthcare Compliance and Ethics Week has already been scheduled for November 4-10, 2018.

**HCPCS Code Changes for 2018**
The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has released the new HCPCS codes for 2018, and there were only a few minor changes. Below is a complete breakdown of the code changes which will be effective for claims with a date of service on or after January 1, 2018.

**New Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L3761</td>
<td>Elbow orthosis with adjustable position locking joint(s), prefabricated, off-the-shelf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L7700</td>
<td>Gasket or seal, for use with prosthetic socket insert, any type, each</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Changes in Code Descriptors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>New Descriptor</th>
<th>Old Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L3760</td>
<td>Elbow orthosis, with adjustable position locking joint(s), prefabricated, item that has been trimmed, bent, molded, assembled, or otherwise customized to fit a specific patient by an individual with expertise</td>
<td>Elbow orthosis, with adjustable position locking joint(s), prefabricated, includes fitting and adjustments, any type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CMS Releases the 2018 Medicare DMEPOS Fee Schedule**
The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released the 2018 Medicare DMEPOS fee schedule effective for Medicare claims with a date of service on or after January 1, 2018. The 2018 Medicare fee schedule for orthotic and prosthetic services will be increased by 1.1% over 2017 rates. The 1.1% increase is a net reflection of the 1.6% increase in the Consumer Pricing Index for Urban Areas (CPI-U) from June 2016 through June 2017, combined with the annual Multi-Factor Productivity Adjustment (MFP) of -0.5%.
The 1.1% increase in the O&P Medicare fee schedule for 2018 represents a 0.4% larger amount than the 2017 increase of 0.7%. Unfortunately, the 2% sequestration based reduction to all Medicare payments remains in effect (currently through 2025) meaning that Medicare fee for service payments will continue to be reduced by 2% due to sequestration. While sequestration continues to impact Medicare reimbursement, it is not cumulative. You will still receive 1.1% more for a service you provide in 2018 than you did in 2017.

**Mastering Medicare Webinars**
The AOPA Mastering Medicare Webinar series continues to be a useful resource for AOPA members and others in the O&P community. During the one-hour monthly Webinars, AOPA experts provide the most up-to-date information on a specific topic. Webinars are held the second Wednesday of each month at 1:00 PM Eastern. One registration is all it takes to provide the most reliable business information and CE Credits for your entire staff. If you’ve missed a Webinar, AOPA will send you a recording of the webinar and quiz for CE credits, so you can still take advantage of the series discount and the valuable learning opportunities:

January 10: Lower Limb Prostheses Policy: A Comprehensive Review
February 14: Inpatient Billing
March 14: Medicare Coding Guidelines: MUEs, PTPs, PDAC, etc.
April 11: Enhancing Cash Flow & Increasing Your Accounts Receivable
May 9: Coding: Understanding the Basics
June 13: Audits: Know the Types, Know the Players, and Know the Rules
July 11: Administrative Documentation: What is Always Needed and Sometimes Needed
August 8: Outcomes & Patient Satisfaction Surveys
September 12: Medicare as Secondary Payer: Knowing the Rules
October 10: Year End Review: How to Wrap-Up & Get Ready for the New Year
November 14: Evaluating Your Compliance Plan & Procedures: How to Audit Your Practice
December 12: New Codes, Medicare Changes & Updates

**AOPA Coding & Billing 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 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. Learn more at bit.ly/2018billing.

February 26 - 27, Atlanta, GA
July 23 - 24, St. Louis, MO
November 12 - 13, Las Vegas, NV

**O&P PAC and Capitol Connection Update**
The O&P PAC Update provides information on the activities of the O&P PAC, including the names of individuals who have made recent donations to the O&P PAC and the names of candidates the O&P PAC has supported. AOPA would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions in 2017 to the O&P PAC:

**PRESIDENT’S CIRCLE ($1,000-$5,000)**
Robert Arbogast  Rick Fleetwood, MPA  Rick Riley
David Boone, BSPO, MPH, PhD  Denise Hoffman  John Roberts Jr., CPO
Jeffrey Brandt, CPO  Aaron Moles, CPO  Bradley Ruhl
J. Martin Carlson, CP  Michael Oros, CPO, LPO, FAAOP  Scott Sabolich, CP
Scott Schneider
Mark Smith, CP
Bernie Veldman, CO
Jim Weber, MBA

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Jim Campbell, PhD, CO, FAAOP
Doyle Collier, CP
Jeff Collins, CPA
Edward De La Torre
Thomas DiBello, CO, LO, FAAOP
Ted Drygas, CPO
A.J. Filippis, CPO
K. Michael Fillauer, CPO

Jeffrey Lutz, CPO
Ginzel, CPO, LPO
Michael Hamontree
John Kenney, CPO, FAAOP
Curt Kowalcyzk, CO
Teri Kuffel, Esq.
Robert Leimkuehler, CPO
William Leimkuehler, CPO, LPO

Martin McNab, CPO
Andrew Meyers, CPO
Walter Racette, CPO(E)
Dale Sheen, CO
Chris Snell, BOCP
Ronald Snell, CP

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Erin Cammarata
Rod Cheney, CPO, FAAOP
Kenneth Cornell, CO
Joseph DeLorenzo, CP
Traci Dralle, Cfm
Arlene Gillis, CP, FAAOP
Eddy Gosschalk, CPO
Michele Hogan
Ralph Hooper, CPO
Jack Jones Jr., BOCO, CO
James Kaiser, CP, LP
Jim Kingsley, COO
Alfred Kritter, CPO, FAAOP
Eileen Levis
Sam Liang
Anita Liberman-Lampear, MA
Elizabeth Mansfield

Dave McGill
Steve McNamee, CP, BOCO, FAAOP
Wendy Miller, BOCO, CDME
Catherine Mize, CPO
Jonathan Naft, CPO
Chris Nolan
Curt Patton, CP
Ricardo Ramos, CP, LP, CPed
Jack Richmond, CPOA, CFO
Ivan Sabel
David Sisson, CP
William Snell, CPO
Jack Steele, CO
Jay Wendt, MBA
Jeff Wensman, CPO
Eddie White, CP
Shane Wurdeman, MSPO, PhD, CP, FAAOP
James Young Jr., CP, LP, FAAOP
Pam Young

1917 Club (Up to $99)
Lisa Arbogast
Vinit Asar
Gerald Bernar Jr., CP, LP
Frank Bostock, CO
Lauren Anderson
Devon Bernard
William Carver
Tina Carlson, CMP
Robert Compton, CPed
Don DeBolt
Esperanza Friedman, CO
Ryan Gleeson

Elizabeth Hammer, BOCO, CFO
Steven Herrera, CPO
Betty Leppin
Brad Mattear, LO, CPA, CFO
Yelena Mazur
Joseph McTernan
Kelly O’Neill, CEM
Don Pierson, CO, CPed
Dewain Ritchie
Duane Romo, CPO
Ashlie White
These individuals have generously contributed directly to a political candidate’s fundraiser and/or have donated to an O&P PAC sponsored event in 2017:

- Lisa Arbogast
- Vinit Asar
- Rudolf Becker III
- Jeff Collins, PCA
- Thomas Costin
- Don DeBolt
- Traci Dralle, CFm
- Thomas F. Fise, JD
- Rick Fleetwood
- Ryan Gleeson
- Lisa Guichet
- Scott Guichet
- Maurice Johnson, CO
- James Kaiser, CP
- Teri Kuffel, Esq
- Stephanie Langdon, CPO, FAAOP
- Sam Liang
- Pam Lupo, CO
- Jeffrey Lutz, CPO
- Michael Oros, CPO, LPO, FAAOP
- Rick Riley
- Scott Schneider
- Stephen Schulte, CP, FAAOP
- Chris Snell, BOCPP
- Clint Snell, CPO
- Peter Thomas, JD
- Jim Weber, MBA
- Shane Wurdeman, MSPO, PhD, CP, FAAOP

The O&P PAC has supported the following members of Congress in 2017:

In 2017 the O&P PAC made contributions to the following members of Congress:

- Sen. Tom Carper (D-Delaware)
- Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-Louisiana)
- Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Arizona)
- Rep. Mike Bishop (R-Michigan)
- Rep. Brian Mast (R-Florida)
- Rep. Richard Neal (D-Massachusetts)
- Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-Maryland)
- Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-Pennsylvania)
- Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio)

If you have not already done so, please consider becoming part of the O&P PAC by reviewing and signing an AOPA O&P PAC authorization form. The work accomplished by the O&P PAC cannot be completed without your help. Learn more at bit.ly/oandppac.

Research and Projects

AOPA Co-OP, the Compendium of O&P
The AOPA Co-OP, a reimbursement, coding and policy resource, now has 248 active users. A recent addition to the Co-OP includes Almanac articles on associated topics across the website, which offer CE opportunities for members that may have missed these opportunities in the printed edition. This member-only online resource serves as a collection of concise, but detailed information with links to supporting documentation about the topics most important to our members. The committee of reimbursement content experts, formed at the beginning of the compendium project, which includes Mitchell Dobson, Elizabeth Ginzel, David McGill and Michael Oros, continues to provide guidance on content development for the Co-OP. The level of expertise provided by members of this committee adds tremendous value to this resource as we continuously update the platform with new content relevant to the O&P profession. The platform’s key subject areas include: Medicare, Medicaid, VA, DOD, Commercial Payors, Data/Evidence, Compliance, State Matters, Good Practices and Trending Topics. The crowdsourcing component of this project allows AOPA to garner the vast knowledge and experience of the membership body, vet that information and provide updates to the Co-OP on a regular basis. Members can find more information and sign up at www.AOPAnet.org/co-op.

Prosthetics 2020
The AOPA Medical Advisory Board met November 14 and 15 at the AOPA Headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. This meeting included a face-to-face joint meeting with the DME MAC/PDAC Medical Directors.
During the meeting the Medical Directors were given a presentation on the first major project from Prosthetics 2020, the RAND study, *Economic Value of Advanced Transfemoral Prosthetics*.

AOPA will continue its commitment to Prosthetics 2020 to ensure that prosthetics are properly positioned for the future value-driven healthcare economy with four key goals – (1) improve the future reimbursement landscape for LEP; (2) match appropriate technology to patient needs instead of payer forced lowest cost technology to all patients; (3) define new patient segments benefitting from LEP technology; and (4) separate the O&P profession from DME in the minds of payers. An outreach to the CMS Center for Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) relating to K-Levels is being planned.

**The RAND Study: Economic Value of Advanced Transfemoral Prosthetics**
The RAND Corporation released its comprehensive, independent, validated study that establishes the value proposition for prosthetic services to amputees in September. A press event was held at the National Press Club on October 19, with a presentation on the findings by Dr. Soeren Mattke. The study focused on advanced prosthetics, including K2/K3 comparisons. Extensive support from experts on both the AOPA Prosthetics 2020 Medical Advisory Board and the Technical Advisory Committee for the Rand Study contributed to RAND’s larger research initiative. AOPA also enlisted Dobson | DaVanzo to expand their level of effort in regard to RAND’s analytic and data needs. The final report, *Economic Value of Advanced Transfemoral Prosthetics*, has been published on the RAND website and is awaiting publication in the Journal of Neurosurgery.

**Orthotics 2020**
With the launch of the Orthotics 2020 project, AOPA has initiated a process to secure critical appraisals of the available scientific literature with respect to five topics: (i) osteoarthritis; (ii) stroke; (iii) scoliosis; (iv) traumatic spinal injuries; and (v) plagiocephaly. Stakeholder subgroups have been formed for each of these five categories, and the drafting process for RFPs is underway. AOPA is excited to transition Orthotics 2020 into a vital enterprise to protect the orthotic services upon which patients depend from attack by payers, and to begin populating a stronger research basis around issues on the value of the orthotic services we offer to patients.

**Communications and Membership**

**Subscribe to AOPA in Advance**
Subscribe to AOPA in Advance, a bi-weekly snapshot of the most important news for orthotic and prosthetic professionals, featuring news from Reuters, Medscape, the O&P Almanac and other leading sources. The brief also lets you know the latest events and happenings at AOPA headquarters, with constant updates from our coding and billing experts. Summaries are written by expert editors to save you time whilst keeping you informed and prepared. Now you can stay informed without having to sift through the news every day. You do not need to be a member of AOPA to receive this free newsletter. Subscribe at bit.ly/AOPASmartBrief.

**2018 AOPA Leadership Conference**
AOPA is holding the 2018 AOPA Leadership Conference which will take place at the Breakers, Palm Beach, FL, January 5-7, 2018. Attendance is limited to Owners, CEOs, COOs or other senior leadership of AOPA member companies. The event will feature presentations from Alison Cernich, PhD, Bill Stainton, and former Congressman Jason Altmire.

**Mobility Saves**
Mobility Saves continues to grow on social media, with over 21,200 likes on Facebook (“like” us at www.facebook.com/mobilitysaves), over 2500 Twitter Followers (www.twitter.com/MobilitySaves), and over 150 connections on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/company/mobility-saves).
Over the past few months, MobilitySaves.org has been redesigned to include a new homepage slider, with new video content, and new navigation. Included in the video content is Dr. Soeren Mattke’s presentation on the results from the RAND study: Economic Value of Advanced Transfemoral Prosthetics. There are also new infographics associated with the data from that study, available on the site. MobilitySaves.org continues to be a tool to communicate to patients, practitioners, and payers that research on orthotic and prosthetic services affirms that mobility saves lives and money.

**O&P Almanac**

The O&P Almanac featured special Centennial content all through 2017. One 2017 feature, the Global Professional section, will transition to feature O&P researchers throughout 2018. The January issue will kick off the next Centennial with a look at the future for O&P and for AOPA, as well as an article “New Year, New Business Strategies for Profitability.”

**O&P News**

AOPA has purchased the assets of *O&P News* and will be publishing it monthly beginning January 2018. We would like to share all things O&P with our referral community, including therapists, orthopedic and vascular surgeons, rehabilitation physicians, physical medicine, and any and all avenues that surround and affect the education, science, and business of orthotics and prosthetics. The new magazine also taps into a high ongoing demand for O&P research. With each monthly issue of the magazine, O&P News will endeavor to present the public with a hot, controversial, or other topic of bottom-line value, and a perspective from an experienced O&P practitioner. We hope you find it a thought provoking and informative new resource that complements AOPA’s flagship publication, the *O&P Almanac*.

**AOPA 365**

If you haven’t already, download AOPA’s app, “AOPA 365”. Beyond the Assembly, this app is also your source to read the *O&P Almanac*, review membership benefits, get current with Hot Issues, see how Mobility Saves, shop in the AOPA Bookstore, access the AOPA Membership Directory, and connect with AOPA through social media. Search “AOPA 365” in the App store or Google Play today!

**Online AOPAversity Learning Center**

Need CE Credits? Want to learn some of the state-of-the-art clinical practices advancing the profession? Wanted to attend the World Congress but had to miss out? Visit bit.ly/aopaversity to create an account today and begin your access to distance learning modules to both educate and help you meet your CEU needs! Recently released sessions include:

- Advancements in Osseointegration Technology for Amputees
- Power in Prosthetics
- New Technologies for Prosthetics and Orthotics
- The Triple Aim
- Cyber Security… IS IT SAFE? Be Prepared!!

**Membership Update**

AOPA welcomes the following new patient care facility members in the fourth quarter of 2017: LeTourneau Lifelike Orthotics & Prosthetics Inc of Beaumont, TX; North Carolina Orthotics & Prosthetics of Goldsboro, NC.

**2017 Operating Performance and Compensation Survey Reports Released**

Eighty-eight patient care facilities representing 350 full-time facilities and 77 part-time facilities, participated in AOPA’s 2017 Operating Performance Survey. Members are encouraged to participate in these benchmarking surveys (FREE) to assist in developing specific strategies to gauge and improve the financial health of their O&P
business. The survey also helps AOPA develop a more accurate picture of the financial trends in the O&P profession.

Published copies of the final 2017 report are available at https://www.aopanetonline.org/store.


Mark your calendars for May 2018: When you participate in the Operating Performance survey, you receive the final published report (and a customized report for your facility) for FREE. Watch for announcements in the AOPA’s online bi-weekly newsletter SmartBrief.

**AOPA Polo Shirts – Now for Sale**
Celebrate AOPA’s Centennial with us by ordering AOPA polo shirts for your office! The shirts are black with a white AOPA logo. The material is moisture wicking, 100% polyester, with rib knit collar, hemmed sleeves and side vents. The polos are unisex but the sizes are men’s M-2XXL. $25 plus shipping. Order in the bookstore at bit.ly/aopastore.

**AOPA’s New Apparel Program**
AOPA is partnering with Encompass Group, a leading provider of health care apparel to offer members special prices on customized polos, scrub tops and lab coats. Customized embroidery is available. For more information on products and available colors, go to www.iconsScrubs.com. Enter access code: ICON-AOPA. Then enter your AOPA member ID, and create your user profile.

**And Finally… It’s Membership Renewal Season for 2018**
It’s membership renewal season for 2018. Your renewal assures that AOPA will continue to be your #1 go-to resource for coding, billing, audit and other regulatory issues impacting your O&P business. We are here to answer your tough questions, and to provide tools that will help improve the fairness of your reimbursements and audit resolutions. Whether your biggest challenge is receiving fair reimbursement, or running a profitable O&P business, AOPA is dedicated to helping you meet and overcome these challenges.

We hope we have, once again, earned the opportunity to prove to you that AOPA membership is one of the best investments you can make for your organization. As always, please let us know if we may be of assistance in any way.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. Fise, JD
Executive Director

**2018 Calendar of Events**

<p>| January 5-7 | 10.5 CEs | Leadership Conference | Palm Beach, FL |
| January 10 | 1.5 CEs | Lower Limb Prostheses Policy: A Comprehensive Review | AOPA Webinar |
| February 14 | 1.5 CEs | Inpatient Billing | AOPA Webinar |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Event Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 26-27</td>
<td>14 CEs</td>
<td>Mastering Medicare: Essential Coding &amp; Billing Techniques Seminar</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>1.5 CEs</td>
<td>Medicare Coding Guidelines: MUEs, PTPs, PDAC, etc.</td>
<td>AOPA Webinar</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 11</td>
<td>1.5 CEs</td>
<td>Enhancing Cash Flow &amp; Increasing Your Accounts Receivable</td>
<td>AOPA Webinar</td>
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<td>May 9</td>
<td>1.5 CEs</td>
<td>Coding: Understanding the Basics</td>
<td>AOPA Webinar</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 13</td>
<td>1.5 CEs</td>
<td>Audits: Know the Types, Know the Players, and Know the Rules</td>
<td>AOPA Webinar</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 11</td>
<td>1.5 CEs</td>
<td>Administrative Documentation</td>
<td>AOPA Webinar</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 23-24</td>
<td>14 CEs</td>
<td>Mastering Medicare: Essential Coding &amp; Billing Techniques</td>
<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
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<td>August 8</td>
<td>1.5 CEs</td>
<td>Outcomes &amp; Patient Satisfaction Surveys</td>
<td>AOPA Webinar</td>
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<td>September 12</td>
<td>1.5 CEs</td>
<td>Medicare as Secondary Payer: Knowing the Rules</td>
<td>AOPA Webinar</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 26-29</td>
<td>30+ CEs</td>
<td>AOPA National Assembly</td>
<td>Vancouver, BC, Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>1.5 CEs</td>
<td>Year End Review: How to Wrap-Up &amp; Get Ready for the New Year</td>
<td>AOPA Webinar</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 4-10</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Healthcare Compliance &amp; Ethics Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 12-13</td>
<td>14 CEs</td>
<td>Mastering Medicare: Essential Coding &amp; Billing Techniques</td>
<td>Las Vegas, NV</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 14</td>
<td>1.5 CEs</td>
<td>Evaluating Your Compliance Plan &amp; Procedures: How to Audit Your Practice</td>
<td>AOPA Webinar</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 12</td>
<td>1.5 CEs</td>
<td>New Codes, Medicare Changes &amp; Updates</td>
<td>AOPA Webinar</td>
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