



**American Orthotic &
Prosthetic Association**

AOPA in Advance

Breaking News for O&P Professionals

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We invite your comments and questions. Please contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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O&P NEWS

California Threatens to End O&P Reimbursement-O&P Groups Rally to Challenge

In the past week **AOPA** has been working to support the California Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (COPA) in their attempt to protect O&P in the state of California. In the past two weeks, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed to the state legislature a budget policy that includes an option which would eliminate all payments under California Medicaid for the prosthetic and orthotic devices used by amputees and those with other limb impairments.

In response to this **AOPA** and the Amputee Coalition of America developed and sent to media contacts in the California area a press release that strongly denounced the consideration of using the elimination of O&P coverage to amputees as an acceptable budget-balancing proposal.

[Click here to read the press release sent by AOPA and ACA.](#)

[Click here to read the summary of the proposed budget cuts.](#)

[Click here to read the language of the proposed budget cuts.](#)

[Click here to read COPA's talking points for California members.](#)

AOPA is providing support to COPA as they wage the on-the-ground fight and will continue to keep members updated regarding this budget situation in California.

Questions? Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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Health Care Reform Passes Both Houses of Congress

Sunday evening, the U.S. House of Representatives passed two critically important landmark bills to enact the very controversial health care reform legislation. The House first passed the identical health care bill that had previously been enacted by the Senate in December. Amidst all the parliamentary confusion this should be clear-no matter what happens with the budget reconciliation bill when it moves to the Senate, America has the biggest new entitlement program since Medicare was enacted almost fifty years ago! The exact and final rules on who will pay for the new law, and the precise terms of the benefits may or may not change a bit, depending on the fate of that reconciliation bill, but the fundamental decision has been made-the President will sign the Senate bill and it WILL be the law of the land!

Orthotics and Prosthetics Issues

So the first question is how did orthotics and prosthetics fare in the health care reform legislation? Well, the upside gains that we desired the most did not come to fruition; but also, we did not take any lethal blows to how O&P is provided and paid for. The best thing that can be said about this law is that, at least according to the Congressional Budget Office, it will result in 32 million additional persons having some measure of health insurance. We wanted to have our Medicare O&P Improvements Act included, which would have required several key steps to improve care and eliminate fraud and abuse enacted in this bill, but it was not. Similarly, we had great hopes that the Federal O&P Parity Bill could be included in this major health insurance measure, but it was not. We succeeded in turning back an early plan that might have bundled O&P services into a larger single payment to hospitals, rehab hospitals or others, and we do have language that requires inclusion of

"rehabilitative and habilitative services" in the federal benefit plan.

There are several parts of the new laws that we do not like. Because of some ambiguities in the language defining health care benefits we have to fight our way through arguments in potential regulations over assuring the O&P benefits are included in all insurance policies. O&P and all other provider groups will now be subject to annual productivity adjustments that can negatively impact your fee schedule. Although the Senate bill provision that established a medical device excise tax provided for a an exemption from the tax for devices regulated by FDA as Class I medical devices, the eventual manager's amendment for the budget reconciliation bill attempts to reverse that policy and impose this additional tax on Class I medical devices (which comprise most component parts and final devices used in orthotic and prosthetic care). We are concerned about the "health insurance compacts," which authorize health insurers to sell insurance across state lines, and in doing so might essentially rescind the state parity bills that have been enacted in 18 states.

There are a few good things that will come from this bill. If we succeed in assuring that "rehabilitative and habilitative services" is interpreted to include prosthetic and orthotic services, this could amount to a virtual mandate of coverage in federal plans. While there are no O&P parity provisions, per se, there is general language in the new law outlawing caps and lifetime limits on health insurance. Depending on how this law plays out in practical application, it may be possible that at least some of the objectives of federal parity are set in motion by this new law. there are several provisions that interact with each other to make this a bit muddled.

Now We Move On to the Next Round...

The enactment of this new law is not the end of this battle. Rather, it is time to move onto the next round. This bill, several thousand pages in length, sets the stage for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to implement this law. That means a huge number of new policies, and enactment of dozens of new regulations. So, a major part of the next round will be having AOPA on the scene, attending the meetings, representing the field through filing comments and rational explanations of why certain steps will enhance or detract from O&P patient care. It is likely there will be some follow-up bills, technical corrections, Medicare extensions and the like, and we will be monitoring each of these to assure that your views and concerns as members are articulated and your vital interests are defended.

Even though our two legislative goals-Medicare Improvements and parity-were not incorporated into the health care bill, that doesn't end these efforts, but just means we must be more creative in our efforts to get them enacted. The Medicare O&P Improvements Act would effect some measures to fight fraud, assure provider qualifications, and link reimbursement to those qualifications. It would actually save the government money. **AOPA** is looking at ways it could be worked into the annual federal budget bill, and there also is the possibility of the guts of this bill being adopted as a regulation by The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to fight fraud and abuse. And, if CMS is not inclined to generate these improvements, patient protections, and budgetary savings, the Office of Management and Budget might mandate the agency to do so.

There are big risks and question marks on the horizon for this new round. Most ominous is that the health care bill did nothing to address the need for a Medicare "doc fix." The reason is that permanently resolving this problem with what is called the "sustainable growth rate formula, or SGR," -a misbegotten formula enacted in legislation a dozen or so years ago which each year dictates a reduction in Medicare physicians fees--will cost \$200 billion or more. While Congress can delay paying the piper with a short-term fix, in the end this problem will need to be tackled, and you can bet that this Congress will be looking to providers to ante up the bulk of the payment in reductions in federal Medicare payments--and this would be on top of the \$500 billion in Medicare cuts approved in the health care bill. It doesn't take a math degree to recognize that with 32 million additional insureds, and no assurance that there are really more revenues in the system, long-term, to pay for their services, the fee per-service is in the cross-hairs for significant reductions, eventually, if not immediately.

Now we move into the stage where we fight our way through the arguments over assuring the O&P benefits are included in all policies, fights about the annual productivity adjustments that can negatively impact your fee schedule, and the medical device excise tax -fights for fraud and abuse reform in O&P, as well as O&P parity will continue. Come to the **AOPA** Policy Forum (May 26-27) at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, where you can get the latest update and advocate your position to your representatives.

[Click here to access the registration form for the 2010 AOPA Policy Forum.](#)

Questions? Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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REMINDER: 2010 AOPA Policy Forum to be held May 26-27

Discussions at the national level of what should be done about health care have been going on for over a year now, and they aren't done yet. As is evident from the two items above not only are there critical implementation issues that have yet to be resolved on the federal health care reform bill, fights on the state level, particularly in regards to licensure, parity and budgets, are also of great importance to the O&P community. At this year's **AOPA** Policy Forum, attendees will be briefed on issues to discuss with their members of Congress, but also trained on techniques and talking points to take home to their states to further O&P's issues at the state level.

The Policy Forum will also feature speakers with special insight into healthcare policy. The agenda will include:

- Congressman Jason Altmire (D-PA), whose vote on health care was long undecided and who has had several conversations with the president on this topic
- What Health Care Reform will mean to your business
- How to be an effective advocate both on Capitol Hill and at the state level
- Lunch and a meet & greet with Congressman William Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA)

The 2010 **AOPA** Policy Forum will be held Wednesday and Thursday, May 26-27, 2010 at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill. This exciting Capitol Hill location will provide a new experience for returning attendees as well as a memorable first time for those who have not attended before. Call (800) 233-1234 or (202) 737-1234 before May 4 and mention the 2010 **AOPA** Policy Forum in order to receive the special room rate of \$259 per night.

[Click here to access the registration form.](#)

AOPA and our talented professional advocates are always working for you in Washington. But no voice is stronger or more listened to than a constituent's. Please join us at the 2010 **AOPA** Policy Forum on May 26-27 to add your voice to the ongoing discussion of what health care should be.

Questions? Contact Erin Kennedy at ekennedy@AOPAnet.org or 571-431-0876.

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AOPA Attends VA/DOD State of the Art Conference

AOPA and other members of the O&P Alliance and the Board of Certification/International were among the O&P related organizations invited to participate in the two day State of the Art (SOTA) conference sponsored by Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense. Extensive review of existing research, a look ahead at future needs and is intended to help identify those areas needing attention.

AOPA executive director Tom Fise represented **AOPA** and provides a summary of and notes from the conference. [Click here to view notes from the event.](#)

Extensive background material helped prepare those participating and among those documents was a comprehensive listing of research projects in the field. [Click here to access the conference's wealth of background materials.](#)

One of the most helpful of these was a 62-page compendium of O&P research already supported from multiple different federal entities including, DOD, VA, NIH, HHS, Department of Education, AHRQ. [Click here to view this document.](#)

Questions? Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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O&P Outreach to Haiti Continues

Al Ingersoll, CP, of Winkley Prosthetics, Orthotics & Pedorthics in Golden Valley, Minnesota, has returned from Haiti and has given **AOPA** permission to post a follow-up update to his first on-the-ground account of the coordination of materials and care.

[Click here to access the second updated from Al Ingersoll, CP.](#)

Questions? Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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Op-Ed by AOPA Lobbyist Featured in *Washington Post*

Just a few days before the scheduled House of Representatives vote on Healthcare reform, an op-ed authored by **AOPA** lobbyist, Tom Scully, brought some common sense suggestions to the overheated debate. Despite his recommendations being ultimately rejected, his years as the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid during the presidency of George W. Bush gave him special insight into the issues.

[Click here to read Tom Scully's Op-Ed.](#)

Questions? Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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Take the February Business Conditions Survey!

The Business Conditions Survey for February 2010 is now available. This month's survey asks questions about revenue comparisons and reimbursements from insurers.

[Click here to take the February Business Conditions Survey.](#)

If you are the primary business decision maker at your O&P facility and are not receiving these surveys, please email Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org.

Questions? Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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Utah State Senate Passes Parity Bill

Last week Utah's State Senate passed a prosthetic parity bill which had already been approved by the state's House of Representatives. H.B. 66 has now been sent to the Governor of Utah, Gary R. Herbert, for consideration.

[Click here to read H.B. 66.](#)

[Click here to view the legislative profile and history of H.B. 66.](#)

Questions? Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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Register now for April 14 Audio Conference: Documenting for Success

The next **AOPA**iversity audio conference, "Documenting for Success: Chart Notes, Prescriptions and Physician's Records," will be held on Wednesday, April 14 from 1-2 p.m. EST. Join us for this informative session to:

- What are the most vital pieces of documentation necessary to support your claim
- When should you document: During the patient interaction, after the interaction, or at the end of the day
- Knowing what words to avoid in progress notes
- What must be on a prescription for it to be Medicare compliant
- Dual dating prescriptions
- How to obtain information from a Physician's records
- Working with your referral sources to make sure they are documenting properly

The cost of participation is just \$99 per line for members (\$199 for non-members). Any number of employees may listen on a given line. Those needing continuing education can earn 1.5 credits by returning the provided quiz within 30 days and scoring at least 80%.

[Click here to register.](#)

Questions? Contact Erin Kennedy at ekennedy@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0876.

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Next Coding & Billing Seminar to Be Held in Pittsburgh, May 24-25

Registrations are rolling in for **AOPA's** second "Mastering Medicare: Advanced Coding & Billing Techniques" seminar of 2010 in Pittsburgh, Pa., May 24-25. Hundreds of your colleagues have already benefited from this detailed, advanced seminar given by **AOPA's** coding experts as well as members of the **AOPA** Coding & Reimbursement Committee. Meet us in Pittsburgh where you will:

- Learn how to code complex devices, including repairs and adjustments, through interactive discussions with **AOPA** experts and your colleagues;
- Join in-depth discussions on compliance with Medicare billing rules and documentation expectations;
- Learn how to assess compliance risk areas and deal with them;
- Learn successful appeal strategies and hints on avoiding claim denials;
- Break-out sessions for practitioners and office staff;
- Detailed information on hot topic issues in O&P; and
- Earn 14 continuing education credits in two days

Seminar attendees stay at the Hyatt Regency Pittsburgh International Airport Hotel for just \$105/night! [Click here to make reservations.](#) You may also call the Hyatt directly at 402-592-6464 / 888-421-1442.

Cost of attending the seminar is \$525 for members/\$725 for non-members if you register by April 23. (After the early bird deadline, the cost goes up by \$25 per person.) Any additional attendees from the same office get a \$50 discount, just \$475 for members and \$675 for non-members. Join us in Pittsburgh, bring your toughest coding questions, and spend an informative two days with **AOPA's** experts and your colleagues.

[Click here to register.](#)

Questions? Contact Erin Kennedy at ekennedy@AOPAnet.org or (571)431-0876.

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2010 AOPA National Assembly Exhibit Hall Space More Than 90 Percent Sold Out

The profession is buzzing about **AOPA's** 2010 National Assembly, which will be held September 29 - October 2 at the luxurious Rosen Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando, Florida. Don't miss the opportunity to attend the biggest industry show of the year in the most fabulous venue yet! With a terrific golf course right on the premises, this year's Thranhardt Golf Classic won't require a bus trip. The proceeds of the tournament will benefit OPAF and **AOPA's** Capitol Connection and a great time will be had by all.

Want to be a part of this year's Exhibit Hall? It's already 90 percent sold out. Call Kelly O'Neill at (571) 431-0852 today to secure your space.

More information on the education program, special events, and all the details of the 2010 **AOPA** National Assembly will be in upcoming issues of **AOPA in Advance**, and registration will open at the beginning of May at www.AOPAnet.org. Watch this space for more details.

Questions? Contact Erin Kennedy at ekennedy@AOPAnet.org or (571)431-0876.

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Athletes with Disabilities Hall of Fame Nominations Sought

The Athletes with Disabilities Hall of Fame is seeking nominees for awards for their new National Hall of Fame in Auburn Hills, MI Awards include the Tony Filippis, Sr., Corporate Leadership Award.

Among the sponsors of last year's awards dinner was Wright & Filippis, Otto Bock, Unisys Corporation, Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan. Deadline for submission is May 31. [Click here in order to view the complete list of awards and nomination criteria.](#)

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O&P RESOURCES FROM AOPA

2010 AOPA Coding Products Now Available

Don't get caught with out of date coding references. Update your **AOPA** coding products today. The 2010 **AOPA** coding products are now available through the **AOPA** bookstore and may be ordered by calling (571) 431-0835.

The 2010 *Illustrated Guide*, *Quick Coder* and *Coding Pro* include all of the newly released HCPCS codes that describe O&P items. In addition, the 2010 *Coding Pro* contains expanded medical policy references and the 2010 *Quick Coder* includes a new section that lists all of the current modifiers used in O&P billing.

As an added bonus, if you purchase all three **AOPA** coding products at the same time, you will receive a bundled discount of \$50 off the regular retail price of the three items as sold separately.

Questions? Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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Check the AOPA Job Board for New Opportunities

If you need a position filled at your business or are interested in looking at other job possibilities within the O&P field, check out the [AOPA Online Job Board](#). In the past month the Job Board has been viewed over a thousand times. If you want people to find out about a job opening at your facility or are interested in posting your resume for employers to view for potential openings, visit the [AOPA Online Job Board](#) today.

And remember: if you advertise on the Online Job Board and decide to also advertise in the *O&P Almanac*, then you'll receive a 5% discount on the cost of advertising in the *Almanac* and on the Job Board.

Questions? Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0835.

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Are You Registered for AOPA's 2010 Series of Medicare Audio Conferences?

Numerous offices have benefited from their participation in **AOPA's** Medicare Audio Conferences. These one hour sessions come to you in the comfort of your office on the second Wednesday of each month at 1:00 pm Eastern. This series provides an outstanding opportunity for you and your staff to stay abreast of the latest hot topics in O&P, as well as gain clarification and ask questions on topics that you may not understand as fully as you would like to.

Seminars are still priced at just \$99 per line for members (\$199 for non-members). Buy the series and get two free; members pay just \$990 and non-members pay \$1990. If you purchase all the conferences, all conferences from months prior to your purchase of the set will be sent to you as CDs.

These convenient one hour telephone seminars are designed to fit easily into your busy schedule. Any practitioners needing credit can get 1.5 per audio conference by returning the provided quiz within 30 days and scoring at least 80%. Billing staff and others who don't need credit nonetheless can gain information they will use right away. The topics for 2010 are:

- January 13: Red Flag Rules: Are You In Compliance? (Available on CD)
- February 10: Hints on Passing Your Supplier Standards Inspection (Available on CD)
- March 10: Billing for Refused/Returned Devices and Deluxe Features
- April 14: Documenting for Success: Chart Notes, Prescriptions and Physicians' Records
- May 12: New Rules for HIPAA: Are You Still Compliant?
- June 9: When Disaster Strikes: Implementing a Contingency Plan
- July 14: Medicare Appeals Strategies
- August 11: Medicare's Knocking: How Good Is Your Compliance Plan?
- September 8: Missed Billing Opportunities: Are You Billing Everything You Can?
- October 13: You're Going To Pay Me WHAT?...Hints on Managed Care Contracting
- November 10: The Ins and Outs of Billing in a Part A Setting: Hospital, SNF and Hospice
- December 8: 2011 New Codes and Medical Policies

If you miss an audio conference, it will be available on CD after the fact. Cost is the same as if you

participate live (\$99/\$199). We hope you'll be able to join us for this year's series.

[Click here to register for any or all of the 2010 AOPA audio conferences.](#)

Questions? Contact Erin Kennedy, ekennedy@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0876.

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O&P INSIDER'S TRACK

The Only Up-to-the Minute O&P Newsline

Businesses in the News

The [2010 Paralympics](#) concluded on Sunday. Competitions began on March 13th in and around Vancouver, Canada. [Click here for results of the 2010 Paralympics.](#)

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People in the News

[Allied Orthopedics Inc.](#) announced that **Ronald Otano** has been promoted to Orthotic Fitter Assistant following his licensure from the State of Florida Department of Health.

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Send Us Your News!

The next **AOPA** *in Advance* will arrive in your inbox on April 6. So if you have a new employee or a new office, tell us! Share your news with the over 15,000 readers of the *O&P Almanac* and **AOPA In Advance** newsletter. Contact Steven Rybicki at srybicki@AOPAnet.org.

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