



**American Orthotic &  
Prosthetic Association**

# AOPA in Advance

Breaking News for O&P Professionals

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### Newsletter Feedback

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

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## O&P NEWS

### AOPA National Assembly, "The Place to Be" is the Highlight of 2011

The record-breaking attendance of more than 2200 members of the O&P profession defined **AOPA's** 2011 Assembly in Las Vegas, marking another **AOPA** convention as "The Place to Be" for O&P.

Festivities started off with a reception in the Exhibit Hall where attendees enjoyed a relaxed evening networking with colleagues and exhibitors. The Tuesday morning Opening General Session began with an address from Melissa Stockwell, CP, a prosthetist who shared her inspiring story of being injured in Iraq and overcoming challenges to become a paralympian and prosthetist. The General Session keynote was followed by the presentation of **AOPA's** Ralph R. "Ronney" Snell Legislative Advocacy Award to **William C. Snell for his years of hard work on behalf of O&P.**

On Tuesday evening, more than 80 **AOPA** members attended the **AOPA** Wine Tasting & Auction. This year's event was a huge success. Those attending the auction were entertained by the humor of guest auctioneer; Tom Watson, CP and color commentator Anita Liberman-Lampear, MA, as they bid on more than 60 lots of wine, cigar and jewelry assembled by Anita and her husband, Alan Lampear. But the big winner of the night was **AOPA's** Government Relations outreach programs, The **AOPA** Wine Tasting & Auction raised more than \$32,000 for the O&P PAC and Capitol Connection funds. **AOPA** would like to thank those individuals who donated items and/or their time to make this event such a smashing success.

[Click here to view the list of names.](#)

Wednesday morning's General Session featured the presentation of the **AOPA** Lifetime Achievement Awards to Robert E. Arbogast and Rudolf B. Becker, III, honoring their years of innovation in and dedication to the orthotics and prosthetics community.

This year's clinical education program was particularly strong with more doctors and more invited speakers than ever, as well as excellent presentations chosen from those who submitted during last year's call for papers. The clinical education also included the inaugural presentation of the following awards: the Otto and Lucille Becker Award, presented to Tyler Manee for the best orthotic abstract submitted for a poster presentation; and the Edwin and Kathryn Arbogast Award presented to Chrysta Irolla for the best prosthetic abstract submitted for a poster presentation. These awards, made possible by a special endowment by Becker Orthopedic and WillowWood, recognizing scientific papers submitted by students/residents for presentation as a poster at the **AOPA** National Assembly. And the business education program was as robust as ever and included the second-annual Sam E. Hamontree, CP, Business Education Lecture Series Award given to Bret Bostock, CO, for his paper "Total Care."

The Annual Business Meeting on Wednesday morning featured reports on **AOPA's** financial health from Treasurer Jim Weber and 2012 goals for **AOPA** from Executive Director Thomas Fise. The following nominees were elected to serve as **AOPA** Directors and officers beginning December 1, 2011:

Thomas V. DiBello, CO, FAAOP - President  
James Kaiser, CP - Immediate Past President  
Thomas F. Kirk, Ph.D. - President-Elect  
Anita Liberman-Lampear, MA - Vice President

Frank Vero, CPO - Director, 1-3 Facilities

Michael Oros, CPO, FAAOP - Director, 4-10 Facilities

Ron Manganiello - Director-at-Large

On Wednesday evening an exhibitor happy hour was highlighted by the celebration the Snell family's centennial in the O&P business. Three generations of Snells were in attendance and were serenaded by Elvis and attendees were able to get their pictures taken with Elvis, and partake in cake and champagne to mark the occasion.

On the final day of the Assembly, [Branier Custom Orthopedic Shoes](#) and [Arizona AFO's](#) sponsorship of the "Wheel of Good Fortune" Hawaiian Vacation Giveaway, raised over \$21,000 for the O&P PAC and Capitol Connection, and resulted in **AOPA** member Harry Layton, CPO winning the grand prize of a luxurious 7-day vacation for two in Hawaii. Other winners in the Giveaway included: Susan Fortener, Teri Kuffel, Esq. and Mike Astilla, MS, CO, BOC.

Watch for the next issue of *AOPA in Advance* where there will be more coverage, including pictures, of these events.

Thanks to all of you - attendees, exhibitors, speakers and board members - for making this year's assembly such a success. A special thanks to the members of the Assembly Committee, chaired by Russ Hornfisher, for their hard work and dedication to making the Las Vegas meeting "The Place to Be." We strive to make the **AOPA** National Assembly each year the best in clinical and business education, the best place to discover and learn about new technology through the exhibits and manufacturer's workshops and the best experience possible for all who attend. Thanks so much for joining us in Las Vegas and we look forward to seeing everyone again next year in Boston!

Questions? Contact Devon Bernard at [dbernard@AOPAnet.org](mailto:dbernard@AOPAnet.org) or (571) 431-0854, or Catherine Graf at [cgraf@AOPAnet.org](mailto:cgraf@AOPAnet.org) or (571) 431-0807.

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## IOM Releasing Essential Health Benefits Recommendations on October 7

As reported in the [August 23 issue of AOPA in Advance](#), **AOPA** met with four high-ranking Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) officials involved in the creation of the "essential health benefits package." The meeting lasted for approximately one hour and the meeting covered what **AOPA** believed to be a flawed Department of Labor report on prevalence of O&P coverage, and prospects for inclusion of O&P among essential health benefits, as well as the HHS decision process. The following contingent of individuals represented HHS in the meeting:

- Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, Director of Coverage Policy, Office of Health Reform
- Nancy DeLew, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
- Lee Wilson, Division Director, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
- Pierre Yong, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
- Sadena Thevarajah, Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs

The O&P-related agenda for the meeting was to explain to the HHS officials that the DOL report (which pegged the prevalence of the O&P benefit in the market at about 47%) had consisted of old data, that no new survey was conducted, that DOL's only data was based on volunteer surveys of employers, and not on insurer data, and that their methodology of simply scanning policies for the words "orthotics and prosthetics" was deficient, unlikely to result in an accurate reading of the prevalence of the O&P benefit among typical employer plans. These points had been made in the letter that **AOPA** President Tom DiBello had written to Secretary Sebelius in late April. **AOPA** was pleasantly surprised when one of the HHS staffers started the meeting by acknowledging that they were aware of all of these deficiencies, recognized that the DOL report likely did not do a very good job of quantifying the prevalence of the O&P benefit, and they wanted to hear from us about other data **AOPA** had and what our experience is from the marketplace.

**AOPA** outlined for the HHS staffers the major findings of the SHRM study, funded by **AOPA**, noting that its findings of 70% prevalence of the benefit among small employer plans, and 75% among major employer plans was based on a much better methodology and tracked much closer to the prevalence we had seen in other data sources. A series of questions and answers ensued about parity, clarifications of O&P, distinction from DME, and reasons why competitive bidding in O&P was limited to off-the-shelf devices. Very interesting was the fact that after HHS personnel understood that parity laws targeted things like annual and lifetime limits, they noted that it is likely the insurance regulations under the Affordable Care Act will eliminate those problems. Further, they asked us if we were aware of any other techniques insurers might be using, or planning to use to thwart patients from receiving the benefit after annual and lifetime limits were removed. The HHS staff also asked if we could try to secure any available data from the SHRM study as to the nature of the plans that had reported NOT providing the O&P benefit.

In terms of timing and future steps, they assured **AOPA** that they will not take any action until after they receive the report they contracted for with the Institute of Medicine (IOM). **AOPA** submitted remarks to the IOM during the comment period in 2010.

[Click here to read AOPA's comments sent to IOM in 2010 regarding O&P as an essential health benefit.](#)

HHS indicated that they specifically asked that the IOM report NOT be conclusive, i.e., not say "this should be in, and this should be out." Once they have the IOM report, HHS will feel free to start drafting a definition, but they expect to have some significant consultations with and input from key stakeholders, e.g., the patient community. They expect to publish their proposals as a proposed rule, with the opportunity for what they expect will be robust comments. HHS must issue a final rule by January 1, 2013, and they recognize that many players would like to know well before this date. It certainly seems that their proposal is more likely to first be seen as a proposal in 2012 rather than in 2011.

The timeline mentioned by HHS to **AOPA** has held: the Institute of Medicine [confirmed](#) last week that it is still scheduled to release its recommendations to HHS on criteria to determine what should be included in the "essential health benefits" definition.

Now, HHS is likely to proceed to take all data—including all of that which **AOPA** delivered through the various channels above, and begin to draft a proposed rule. Either during that writing process, OR after they finish and publish a draft, **AOPA** expects that HHS will follow through on their promise to **AOPA**, and others, to provide opportunities for further dialogue with stakeholders, like the Amputee Coalition (AC) and **AOPA**, and we will, of course, take advantage of that opportunity when it is afforded us. **AOPA** will also respond to their proposed rule in force, and encourage every **AOPA** and AC member to do the same—but only after HHS has published their proposal.

**AOPA** will update members regarding the IOM report's contents as soon as it is released on October 7 and will continue to update members with any and all essential health benefits news from HHS as it becomes available.

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

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## White House Releases Deficit Reduction Plan, Includes Cuts to Medicaid and Medicare

On September 19, the White House announced its promised plan for debt ceiling/deficit reductions and how it would pay for the [American Jobs Act](#). The plan includes \$320 billion in reductions over ten years for Medicare and Medicaid. Specifically, the \$320 billion in reductions rely on the extension of DME cuts to Medicaid, presumably mostly competitive bidding items, as well as cuts to SNF, rehabs, and post-acute care providers. Below are two documents (info from White House announcement) and

a more comprehensive summary from **AOPA's** lobbying consultant Alston & Bird on big picture overview of what is on table for the Supercommittee that is currently holding negotiations.

[Click here to read the White House's summary of its deficit reduction plan.](#)

[Click here to read Alston & Bird's overview of possible, upcoming healthcare-related budget cuts.](#)

A fair number of the items in the Obama deficit plan are described more thoroughly in the Alston & Bird document, and note that there are other Medicare cost-saving proposals there that were not selected by Obama, but which may still come into play.

**AOPA** will continue to keep members updated as to the status of the President's deficit reduction plan as well as any news from the Supercommittee negotiations.

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

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## PDAC Requires Product Labeling as of February 1, 2012

The Medicare Pricing, Data Analysis, and Coding contractor (PDAC) has recently published an announcement effective February 1, 2012, that any product that is subject to a PDAC coding verification review must be permanently labeled. According to the PDAC, the label must contain the manufacturer's name, product name and model number. The label on any product delivered to a patient must be identical to the label on the product submitted for coding verification, and must be permanent in nature. For diabetic shoes and inserts, the label must be on both inserts that make up a pair.

PDAC has published a list of products that the labeling requirement applies to. The list includes, diabetic shoes and inserts, prefabricated orthoses, custom orthoses that are not fabricated within a practice location (e.g. manufacturer or central fabricator), and prefabricated prosthetic components. AOPA has confirmed that the labeling requirement only applies to products that are required by policy to have a PDAC coding verification (e.g. spinal orthoses, diabetic inserts, etc.) or products for which a voluntary coding verification has been submitted to PDAC.

It is important to remember that not all O&P products require PDAC verification. The only O&P items that currently require coding verification by PDAC include off the shelf diabetic shoes, heat molded diabetic inserts, custom diabetic inserts made outside of the O&P facility, all spinal orthoses made outside of the O&P facility, knee orthoses described by L1845 and L4380, and cervical orthoses described by L0174. However, PDAC has confirmed that if a voluntary request for coding verification is submitted, those products are then subject to the labeling requirement.

[Click here to access the full announcement.](#)

**AOPA** is reviewing the announcement and will express any concerns regarding the labeling requirement to the PDAC.

Questions regarding this issue may be directed to Joe McTernan at (571) 431-0811; [jmcternan@AOPAnet.org](mailto:jmcternan@AOPAnet.org) or Devon Bernard at (571) 431-0854; [dbernard@AOPAnet.org](mailto:dbernard@AOPAnet.org).

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## Update on Accountable Care Organization Development

As reported in *InformationWeek* a recent KLAS report (a research firm) that surveyed 197 providers and was entitled [Accountable Care: Providers Forge the ACO Trail](#), indicated that more than 1/3 of the

survey participants plan to participate in the CMS Accountable Care Organization Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP). The report's co-author, Colin Buckley, indicated that even though there is a lack of clarity on how the MSSP will work (the final rule has not yet been released), many organizations are ready to join the ACO movement. However, Buckley also noted that, while the survey showed 36% of providers plan to participate in the MSSP and 22% planned to seek other alternatives, he would not be surprised if many of the 36% ended up joining the 22% seeking alternatives to the MSSP. Concerns from providers about participating in an ACO included: (1) the technology requirements needed, (2) Administrative and business tasks (related to compiling, analyzing, sharing data, risk management, distributing bundled payments) and (3) provider and staff buy-in into a new culture of care delivery model. We have yet to see if and how these concerns will be addressed in the forthcoming MSSP final rule from CMS. Please note it is **AOPA's** view that very few, if any, O&P patient care facilities will be in the position to seek recognition by CMS as an accountable care organization. However, we believe it is important to keep you updated on the development of accountable care organizations in the event you are affiliated with a hospital or other provider group whose decision to become an accountable care organization and/or participate in the MSSP affects aspects of your operations.

[Click here to read AOPA's summary of the ACO proposed rule.](#)

Questions? Contact Catherine Graf at [cgraf@AOPAnet.org](mailto:cgraf@AOPAnet.org) or (571) 431-0807.

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## AOPA Receives Positive Signal on Outcomes-Based Research from Senate Subcommittee Report

**AOPA** was alerted by Catorina Macdonald, President of **AOPA's** consultant Linchpin Strategies, about the inclusion of O&P-related language in a Senate Labor and Health and Human Services subcommittee report. In particular, the report noted:

*Prosthetics Research-* The Committee is aware that increasing numbers of Americans are undergoing amputation as a result of the growing prevalence of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and other reasons. The Committee also understands that, to date, little research has been done to examine prosthetic outcomes and to link prosthetic and orthotic treatments, devices and supports to patient outcomes. In order to support evidence-based healthcare practice in prosthetics and orthotics, and establish which approaches work best for which patients, the Committee encourages NICHD (National Institute of Child Health & Human Development) to work with the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research and experts in the field of prosthetic research to develop a prosthetics outcomes research agenda and implement needed research.

While this is a small step on the way to securing O&P-related evidence- and outcomes-based research grants, Ms. Macdonald indicated that the language provides **AOPA** with "opportunity to build on the language with the agencies and with appropriations committee next year." As part of her efforts to enhance the prospects for appropriations funding for O&P education (funding for additional O&P Masters programs) and outcomes research, Ms. Macdonald has conducted approximately 200 meetings with legislative appropriations staff, and on several occasions has enlisted the assistance of **AOPA** Board members in writing letters to the editor, and letters to key Senate legislators.

**AOPA** will keep members updated as to any news from Ms. Macdonald regarding appropriations designated for O&P-related education and/or research.

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

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## SOLD OUT: AOPA's Final Coding & Billing Seminar of 2011

Due to the overwhelming interest in **AOPA's** Mastering Medicare Advanced Coding & Billing Seminar

all available spaces for the final seminar have been sold, and regrettably registration for the seminar is now closed. If you are still interested in attending the seminar contact Stephen Custer at (571) 431-0876 or [scuster@AOPAnet.org](mailto:scuster@AOPAnet.org) and place your name on a waiting list.

Keep an eye on the *AIA* and the O&P Almanac for the 2012 seminar schedule, and don't miss your chance to attend this ever popular seminar.

Questions? Contact Stephen Custer at [scuster@AOPAnet.org](mailto:scuster@AOPAnet.org) (571) 431-0876.

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## O&P PAC Corner

The O&P PAC Corner provides updates 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. The O&P PAC would like to thank all those who attended the 2011 **AOPA** National Assembly and made a contribution to the O&P PAC.

[Click here to view the list of PAC Contributors.](#)

The purpose of the O&P PAC is to advocate for legislative or political interests at the federal level, which have an impact on the orthotic and prosthetic community. The O&P PAC achieves this goal by working closely with members of the House and Senate to educate them about the issues, and help elect those individuals who support the orthotic and prosthetic community.

In order to participate in and receive information about the O&P PAC, federal law mandates that you must first sign an authorization form.

[Click here to view and sign an O&P PAC authorization form.](#)

Questions? Contact Devon Bernard at [dbernard@AOPAnet.org](mailto:dbernard@AOPAnet.org) or (571) 431-0854, or Catherine Graf at [cgraf@AOPAnet.org](mailto:cgraf@AOPAnet.org) or (571) 431-0807.

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## Helping Tell the Story: Capitol Connection

**AOPA's** advocacy effort also benefits from the support members provide Capitol Connection. Capitol Connection provides educational support through special studies to support **AOPA** legislative and regulatory positions; publications to build a well-informed team of **AOPA** members; and other extraordinary projects that advance **AOPA** government relations agenda. **AOPA** would like to thank all those who attended the 2011 National Assembly and made a donation to the Capitol Connection fund.

[Click here to view the list of names.](#)

Questions? Contact Devon Bernard at [dbernard@AOPAnet.org](mailto:dbernard@AOPAnet.org) or (571) 431-0854, or Catherine Graf at [cgraf@AOPAnet.org](mailto:cgraf@AOPAnet.org) or (571) 431-0807.

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## Register for AOPA's October 12 Audio Conference: "Developing Your Medicare Billing Compliance Plan"

Do you know the difference between fraud and abuse? Do you have a billing compliance plan in place? The DME MACs and the Office of Inspector General are taking a closer look at the billing practices of O&P facilities, and with this increased scrutiny, a well designed, effective billing compliance plan is paramount for any successful O&P business. The ability to make sure your own billing practices are sound may prevent unnecessary audits down the road. Join **AOPA** on October

12, 2011 for an hour long Audio Conference and learn how to develop a billing plan and understand why compliance is such an important part of your business operations. An **AOPA** expert will address the following issues during the Audio Conference:

- What elements are included in an effective billing compliance plan
- Where to find help with your plan
- How it can mesh with other compliance requirements (HIPAA, accreditation, etc.)
- How to Communicate the standards and procedures of the plan to all employees
- How to enforce your compliance plan

The cost of participating is \$99 per line for **AOPA** members (\$199 for non-members) and any number of employees may listen on a given line. Listeners can earn 1.5 continuing education credits by returning the provided quiz within 30 days and scoring at least 80 percent. Contact Devon Bernard at [dbernard@AOPAnet.org](mailto:dbernard@AOPAnet.org) or (571) 431-0854 with content questions.

[Click here to register online.](#)

Questions? Contact Stephen Custer at [scuster@AOPAnet.org](mailto:scuster@AOPAnet.org) (571) 431-0876.

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## O&P RESOURCES FROM AOPA

### Check Out the AOPA Job Board for New Opportunities in O&P

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](#). The online job board sports a freshly updated look and an easy-to-navigate profile creation system.

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 percent discount on the cost of advertising in the *Almanac* and on the Job Board.

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

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## The 2011 Audio Conference Series from AOPA

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 can nonetheless gain information they will use right away. The topics for 2011 are:

- January 12: How to Meet the New Medicare Supplier Standards (Available on CD)
- Feb. 9: Using the Lower Limb Medical Policy to Your Advantage (Available on CD)
- March 9: Enhance Your Claims Success, Two Letters at a Time (Available on CD)
- April 13: Improving Clinical Documentation (Available on CD)

- May 11: Which Box to Check? The Negative Effect of the 855S on Reimbursement (Available on CD)
- June 8: Preventing Audit Disasters (Available on CD)
- July 13: Don't Rile the OSHA Police (Available on CD)
- August 10: How to Get Paid for Miscellaneous and Repair Codes (Available on CD)
- September 14: Don't Run Afoul of the KO Rules (Available on CD)
- October 12: Developing Your Medicare Billing Compliance Plan
- November 9: Happy Holidays: Kickbacks and Gifts in O&P
- December 14: Are You Ready for the New Year? 2012 New Codes and Policies

[Click here to register for any 2011 Audio Conference.](#)

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.

Questions? Contact Stephen Custer at [scuster@AOPAnet.org](mailto:scuster@AOPAnet.org) (571) 431-0876.

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## O&P INSIDER'S TRACK

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

#### People in the News

[Hanger Orthopedic Group](#) announced the following personnel updates:

- **Richard Colvin, BOCP**, joins Hanger's West Monroe, Louisiana facility;
- **Joyce Hess, C. Ped.**, joins Hanger's patient care facility in Olympia, Washington;
- **Kenneth W. Wilson** was announced as President and Chief Operating Officer of Hanger's orthotic and prosthetic distribution business unit, [Southern Prosthetic Supply](#) (SPS); and
- **William Woslum, CO**, joins its patient care facility in Pensacola, Florida

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#### Businesses in the News

[Board of Certification/Accreditation, International](#) (BOC) announced that it will implement immediate certification exam scoring, year-round testing, and added website features for candidates and practitioners. Beginning Nov. 1, candidates taking BOC certification tests will receive instant results for multiple-choice examinations and BOC will administer these exams year round and at more convenient times - including Mondays through Fridays and some Saturdays. In addition, [my.bocusa.org](http://my.bocusa.org) now offers options for practitioners to:

- verify and edit their contact information;
- view their current CEU records;
- view their list of current certification categories and apply for new certifications;
- print a duplicate copy of their certificates;
- check renewal payment due dates and pay fees on the secured site; and
- access BOC's directory of practitioners, powered by Google Maps.

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## Send Us Your News!

The next **AOPA in Advance** will arrive in your inbox on October 18. 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](mailto:srybicki@AOPAnet.org)

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