



**American Orthotic &
Prosthetic Association**

AOPA 3rd Quarter 2014 Staff Report

To: AOPA Membership
From: Thomas F. Fise, Executive Director
Date: October 16, 2014
Subject: Cliff Hanger, Who Knows!

Frustration abounds as elections take over and the continued gridlock in Washington affects things big and small. O&P certainly feels the frustration in not seeing any truly solid relief from the destructive RAC audits whose further damage is amplified by the three year plus delay in getting an Administrative Law Judge hearing. Anecdotal evidence still confirms a high rate of denials overturned by the ALJ for O&P claims. The backlog prompted CMS to offer hospitals, and thus far only hospitals, a settlement rate of 68 cents on the claim's dollar value.

The disappointing decision by the court in granting the government's motion to dismiss AOPA's lawsuit against CMS alleging they didn't follow the rules in making a dramatic policy change with the "Dear Physician" letter which helped trigger the RAC audits leaves only two available venues for relief – the Congress, which, except for a short post-election "lame duck" session, is out until early 2015, and the White House. An appeal has been made to appropriate White House staff but no results yet.

AOPA and the O&P Alliance's efforts to craft a legislative solution have found some ground. Rep. Ellmers (R-NC) introduced H.R. 5083 that covers some of the bases, but not all. Two other bills are in the drafting stage that fill in some of the gaps but realistically, there can be little expectation of anything significant happening until the new Congress convenes in January. Of course then all of the bills AOPA and the Alliance have caused to be introduced in this 113th Congress must start from scratch by being re-introduced in the 114th Congress.

The O&P PAC has stepped up to support those incumbents who understand the patient care challenges in O&P and the devastation RAC audits have brought to the field. Of course the bigger question over which party controls the U.S. Senate and how that will impact O&P issues remains unanswered until Election Day.

Legislative Advocacy & Update

Congresswoman Duckworth Appeals to White House Liaison on Disabilities for Relief for O&P Providers

Continuing her work as a strong advocate on behalf of the O&P profession, Rep. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), took another major step on behalf of O&P professionals and their patients.

Moving beyond her efforts in Congress, during a meeting in Chicago, Rep. Duckworth requested Ms. Susan Axelrod, who was appointed during the summer by President Obama as a Special White House Liaison on Disabilities, to advocate for special relief for O&P companies. In presenting the specific 6-point request, prepared by AOPA, to Ms. Axelrod, who is also the spouse of David Axelrod, one of the chief architects of the President's

elections and a veteran political adviser to President Obama, Rep. Duckworth was also accompanied by an AOPA member, Mr. Jim Kingsley of Scheck & Siress.

Here are 6 key points AOPA addresses in the request underscoring that help is needed from the Executive Branch:

1. Patient care activities--work performed by physicians, therapists and prosthetic and orthotic professionals need to be exempted from prior authorization.
2. For purposes of audits, and all other purposes, the prosthetists' notes/records on patient encounters are a legitimate part of the medical record, on a parallel basis with those of physicians and therapists.
3. Orthotics and prosthetics patient care needs to be recognized as separate and distinct from supplying durable medical equipment, since the former delivers lifetime patient care to assure patient mobility while the latter delivers goods and commodities; AND CMS needs to be required to track all audit information--number of appeals and their success more granularly separately DMEPOS into separate breakdowns for DME and O&P.
4. RAC audits, Part A and B, that are not directly related to demonstrated fraud must be suspended until HHS can show adherence to the legal requirement for a decision on appeals to the Administrative Law Judge level within 90 days of request, otherwise appeals (estimated 1 million backlogged claims by year-end) will continue to balloon.
5. Medicare Prior Authorization needs to constitute a promise of payment AND all RAC, prepayment and other audits need to be terminated in those instances where prior authorization has been secured (that is, has been required by Medicare) in the absence of demonstrated evidence of fraudulent billings.
6. Provisions of H.R. 3112 relating to prohibition of Medicare payment to unlicensed and unaccredited providers need to be implemented in final rule before the end of 2014.

Medicare DMEPOS Audit Improvement and Reform (AIR) Act of 2014

The Medicare DMEPOS AIR Act of 2014 (H.R. 5083) was introduced by Representative Renee Ellmers (R-NC) on July 11, 2014 and currently has 36 co-sponsors. This bill addresses many, but not all, of the issues caused by the overzealous and overreaching audits being performed by or on behalf of the Medicare program; most importantly for O&P, it would recognize documentation by orthotists and prosthetists as part of the medical record. Other O&P provisions found in the AIR Act include:

- 1) When compiling and publicly reporting information on appeals filed and success of appeals for providers at ALJ level, HHS shall create separate categories for orthotics and prosthetics and for durable medical equipment and supplies;
- 2) In calculating error rates, CMS shall exclude claims for payments that have been denied and are being appealed by a provider or supplier.

Some have pointed out that H.R. 5083 is not perfect; of course they are correct, but virtually no bill is. AOPA has endorsed the bill because it does some good things for O&P and what is good about this bill outweighs anything that is "not so good". To receive more information on this bill or to send a letter to your Representative asking them to sign on and become a co-sponsor of H.R. 5083 please visit the AOPAVotes website at www.AOPAVotes.org. As of October 9, 2014, 275 AOPA members have sent 296 letters to 151 members of Congress asking for their support of H.R. 5083.

The Medicare O&P Improvement Act

The Medicare O&P Improvement Act of 2013 (H.R. 3112) was introduced by Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA) and Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA) on September 17, 2013, and it takes a very proactive approach to tackling fraud and abuse while saving money for the Medicare program and taxpayers. It would require CMS to implement provisions of the Benefits Improvement and Portability Act of 2000. AOPA will seek introduction of similar legislation in the 114th Congress.

Insurance Fairness for Amputees Act

The Insurance Fairness for Amputees Act (H.R. 3020) was introduced by Rep. Charles Dent (R-PA) and Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ) on August 2, 2013 and it attempts to provide fairness under group and individual health plans for prosthetics and custom orthotics care on the same basis as the plan's general medical and surgical coverage, by ensuring that no separate caps, exclusions or lifetime limits be placed on orthotic and prosthetic services and items. Again, AOPA and its partner organizations are expected to seek introduction of this legislation in 2015.

Injured & Amputee Veterans Bill of Rights

Injured and Amputee Veterans Bill of Rights (H.R. 3408) was introduced by Representative Renee Ellmers (R-NC) on October 31, 2013 and currently has 41 co-sponsors. This bill will require the VA to post a written list of 'rights' that apply to every veteran in need of O&P care. Similar legislation is expected to be introduced in 2015.

AOPA Government Relations Update

2014 O&P PAC and Capitol Connection 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. Capitol Connection is a separate fund created by AOPA to help cover any costs or expenditures that may not be covered by the general government relations budget or for which O&P PAC funds cannot be used; including but not limited to creating and distributing special educational materials, hosting the annual AOPA Policy Forum and maintaining the AOPAVotes website.

Thanks to the following individuals for their contributions to the O&P PAC and/or Capitol Connection in 2014. This list covers the period from June 9, 2014 through October 9, 2014. If we missed your name please accept our apologies, and any contributions made or received after October 9, 2014 will be published in the O&P Almanac and the next quarterly staff report.

- John Allen, CPO
- Michael Allen, CPO, FAAOP
- Dale Anderson, CPO
- Michael Angelico
- Ryan Arbogast
- Rudolf Becker, III
- Vincent Benenati
- Jose Berdecia
- Kel Bergmann, CPO
- James Bernardino, CPO
- Frank Bostock, CO
- Luke Brewer, CPO
- Robin Burton
- Michael Burton
- Scott Buser
- Erin Cammaratta
- Jim Campbell, CO, PhD, FAAOP
- Keith Capps
- J. Martin Carlson, CPO
- Jason Cavegn, Cped
- Jeff Collins, CPA
- Charles Dankmeyer, CPO
- Don DeBolt
- Mark Degroff
- Thomas Dibello, CO, LO, FAAOP
- Bernadette Douroux, CPO
- Ted Drygas, CPO
- Susi Ebersbach
- Kristin Faircloth, CPO
- David Falk
- A.J. Filippis, CPO
- Thomas F. Fise, JD
- Jim Fitzpatrick
- Rick Fleetwood, MPA
- Steven Foy, CPO
- Michael Fulkerson, MSHA
- Arlene Gillis
- Marbee Gingras
- Richard Gingras, CPO
- Elizabeth Ginzal, CPO, LPO
- Melody Giraldo, CPO
- Susan Guerra, RN, CFO
- William Gustavson

- Warren Hagen, CO, BOCO, C.Ped, PTA
- Denise Hoffman
- Neal James
- David Johnson, CO
- Rosie Jovane
- Brian Kasprowicz, CO
- Steve Kelly
- Steven Kiny, DPM
- Jim Kingsley
- Thomas Kirk, Ph.D.
- William Kitchens, CO
- Alfred Kritter, CPO, FAAOP
- Teri Kuffel, Esq.
- Jon Leimkuehler, CPO, FAAOP
- Alan Lett, CPO
- Eileen Levis
- Sam Liang
- Anita Liberman-Lampear, MA
- James Liston, CP, FAAOP
- Pedro Llanes, CPO, BOCPO
- Carlo Luetto
- Pam Lupo, CO
- Jeff Lutz, CPO
- Ronald Manganiello, CEO
- Ann Mantelmacher
- Joe Martin, COO
- Brad Mattear, CPA, Cfo
- Mark McDonald, CPO
- Hannah McNinch, CPO
- Hugo Aparicio Vivas Morales, CO
- Jonathan Naft, CPO
- Chris Nolan
- Michael Oros, CPO, LPO
- John O'Sullivan, CO, BOCP
- J. Curt Patton, III, BOCPO, CP
- Larry Powers, CP
- Paul Prusakowski, CPO
- Walter Racette, CPO
- Ricardo Ramos, CP, C.Ped, LP
- Tonja Randolph
- Rick Riley
- John Roberts, Jr., CPO
- Bradley Ruhl
- Andreas Schultz
- Donald Shurr, CPO, PT
- Mark Silva
- C. William Teague, CP
- Chrissy Thomas
- Terry Thompson, CO
- Shannon Thompson, CPO
- H.E. Thranhardt
- Steve Tillges
- Robert Tillges, CPO, FAAOP
- Mike Vanek
- Bernie Veldman, CO
- Frank Vero, CPO
- John Wall, PT, CPO, FAAOP
- James Weber, MBA
- Jeff Wensman, CPO
- Eddie White, CP
- Ashlie White
- Scott Williams
- William Wright, CP, BOCO
- Pam Young

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, as they provide valuable support in achieving the legislative goals of AOPA and the O&P PAC. This list covers the period from June 9, 2014 through October 9, 2014. If we missed your name please accept our apologies, and any contributions made or received after October 9, 2014 will be published in the O&P Almanac and the next quarterly staff report

- Daniel Bastian, CP
- Jim Cahill, CPO
- James Campbell, Ph.D., CO
- J. Martin Carlson, CPO
- Rikki Cheney
- Glenn Crumpton, CPO
- Charles Dankmeyer, CPO
- Paula Doherty
- Susi Ebersbach
- Jeff Erenstone
- Michael Fenner, CP, BOCPO
- Thomas F. Fise, JD
- Rick Fleetwood, MPA
- Anita Liberman-Lampear, MA

- Lisa Guichet
- Frank Ikerd, CPO
- Lori Jack
- Jim Kaiser, CP
- Jim Kingsley
- Eric Loposer, CO, BOCPO
- Kenneth Meier, CPO, FAAOP
- Jeff Parson, CO
- Ricardo Ramos, CP, C.Ped, LP
- Kurt Schlau, CP
- Donald Shurr, CPO, PT
- Christopher Snell
- Gordon Stevens, CPO
- Peter Thomas
- John Tyo, CP, BOCPO
- Frank Vero, CPO
- Jim Weber, MBA
- Elliot Weintrob, CPO

7th Annual Wine Auction & Tasting and The \$5000 Exhibit Hall Giveaway

During the 2014 AOPA National Assembly in Las Vegas, AOPA's Government Relations outreach programs held two special events: the 7th Annual O&P Wine Tasting & Auction and the \$5,000 Giveaway sponsored by Arizona AFO Inc. These events enabled the O&P PAC and Capitol Connection to raise over \$45,000; this money is vital to continue the advocacy work that is being done on behalf of the O&P community on Capitol Hill and beyond, especially with the 2014 mid-term elections around the corner.

The 7th Annual O&P Wine Tasting & Auction took place, on Friday, September 5th and was attended by over 70 people. The festivities were overseen by two special guest auctioneers, O&P PAC Chairman Rick Fleetwood and current AOPA Board member Scott Schneider. The \$5,000 Giveaway was held on Saturday, September 6th and the grand prize winner was AOPA member Erin Cammaratta of Complete Business Solutions.

We would like to thank the following individuals for generously donating items and/or their time to the success of the 7th Annual Wine Auction & Tasting and the \$5,000 Giveaway:

- Vinit Asar
- Rudolf Becker, III
- Kel Bergmann, CPO
- Frank Bostock, CO
- Jim Campbell, CO, FAAOP, PhD
- Jeff Collins, CPA
- Thomas Costin
- Charles Dankmeyer, CPO
- Don DeBolt
- Jehan de LA BROSSE
- Lesley DiBello
- Thomas F. Fise, JD
- Rick Fleetwood, MPA
- Marbee Gingras
- Richard Gingras, CPO
- Elizabeth Ginzler, CPO, LPO
- Alfred Kritter, CPO, FAAOP
- Lynn Kritter
- Eileen Levis
- Anita Liberman-Lampear, MA
- Alan Lampear
- Pam Lupo, CO
- Ronald Manganiello
- Adrianna Manganiello
- Dave McGill
- Tina Moran
- Hans Georg Näder
- Michael Oros, CPO
- Ann Oros
- Don Pierson, CO,
- Scott Schneider
- Gordon Stevens, CPO
- Frank Vero, CPO
- James Weber, MBA
- Diane Weber
- Claudia Zacharias, MBA, CAE

O&P PAC Supported Members of Congress

The O&P PAC has made contributions to the following members of Congress. This list covers the period from June 9, 2014 through October 9, 2014. Any contributions made after October 9, 2014 will be published in the O&P Almanac and the next quarterly staff report:

- Rep. Michael Burgess (R-TX 26th District)
- Rep. Bill Cassidy (R-LA 6th District), running for Senate seat
- Rep. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL 8th District)
- Rep. Renee Ellmers (R-NC 2nd District)
- Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY 2nd District)
- Rep. Ann Kuster (D-NH 2nd District)
- Rep. James Lankford (R-OK 5th District), running for Senate seat
- Rep. Daniel Maffei (D-NY 24th District)
- Rep. Kenny Marchant (R-TX 24th District)
- Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX 10th District)
- Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
- Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC 11th District)
- Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL 1st District)
- Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-MN 3rd District)
- Rep. Tom Price (R-GA 6th District)
- Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR)
- Rep. Tom Reed (R-NY 23rd District)
- Rep. Peter Roskam (R-IL 6th District)
- Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD 2nd District)
- Rep. Aaron Schock (R-IL 18TH District)
- Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX 21st District)
- Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA 5th District)
- Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA 5th District)
- Rep. Carroll Wenstrup (R-OH 2nd District)

Coding, Reimbursement and Regulatory Update

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. The proposal contains neither a promise of payment nor a suspension of audits. Without both and some additional “fixes” the only likely consequence would be another layer of bureaucracy which would delay patient care as well as reimbursements for providers. As of the July 28, 2014 comment filing deadline, 294 patients had registered their objections to the proposed rule. Another 448 comment letters were sent to CMS by AOPA members using the AOPAVotes website which brought the O&P community’s to a total of 742 comments.

AOPA conducted a four-pronged effort to make sure that CMS understood that the O&P community has definite concerns about what may have been a well-intentioned effort to help relieve the backlog in the appeals process. Members were educated on the details of the CMS proposal through two free webinars with more than 400 members participating. *AOPA In Advance SmartBrief* items and blast emails further educated members and alerted them to the problems in the CMS proposal and urged members to file their individual comments. The AOPAVotes website provided the template for member comments as well. A special postcard was developed by AOPA and then provided to members for distribution to their amputee patients to sign and send to CMS, resulting in the 294 patient comments. The final step was the process authorized by the AOPA Board to appoint a workgroup tasked with developing AOPA comments working with AOPA staff.

Off The Shelf Orthoses

AOPA submitted formal comments on the recent 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* was published in the July 11, 2014 *Federal Register*.

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.

In summary, AOPA strongly supports the following clear criteria for both personnel and conditions that may (or may not) appropriately participate in provision of custom fitted orthoses to Medicare beneficiaries, as stated in the following excerpt of the comments on this proposed rulemaking by the Orthotic & Prosthetic Alliance.

“As noted above, CMS’s proposed rule precludes most unlicensed/non-certified personnel on the office staff in physician practices, therapy offices or orthotic facilities from fitting and adjusting prefabricated/custom-fitted orthoses for Medicare beneficiaries. The O&P Alliance agrees that the unlicensed/non-certified, non-clinical staff and persons who are in the health professional’s practice should not be permitted to provide such services.

Unless the state’s licensure statute provides otherwise, those licensed or certified healthcare professionals who regularly engage and/or assist in the care and treatment of patients with conditions requiring orthotic treatment (including certified orthotic fitters) that truly act under the supervision of a physician (or other individual who has specialized training*) should be permitted to continue providing such services with respect to custom-fitted orthoses.”

* Defined as a physician, treating practitioner, occupational therapist, physical therapist, or certified orthotist operating in compliance with all applicable federal and state licensure and regulatory requirements.

In the end, similar statements on “certified licensed” personnel operating “under supervision” were submitted by several other diverse provider groups interested in OTS orthotics.

Three hundred seventy-eight members used the AOPAVotes website to submit comments to CMS, and 203 patients submitted the AOPA-provided postcards to CMS.

Introduction of Two K-Codes to Describe OTS versions of Knee Orthoses Described by L1843 and L1845

CMS released two new “K” codes, effective October 1, 2014 that will be used to describe off the shelf (OTS) versions of custom fitted knee orthoses currently 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

The creation of these two new K codes expands the current list of “split codes” that describe the same product that is delivered either on a custom fitted or OTS basis from 23 to 25. A larger concern is the fact that CMS has issued new OTS codes for knee orthoses that were previously acknowledged publicly by CMS as always requiring the expertise of a properly trained individual in order to ensure the proper fitting of the orthosis. As part of its response to comments received on the initial CMS proposed list of orthotic HCPCS codes subject to competitive bidding, CMS agreed with AOPA’s comment that products described by L1843 and L1845 should never be delivered in an OTS environment.

Despite AOPA’s continued concern regarding the release of these codes, including direct communication with Sean Cavanaugh, the Deputy Administrator and Director of the Center for Medicare Services at CMS, the K codes were effective for dates of service on or after October 1, 2014. AOPA continues to use all available resources to challenge the issuance of these new codes and encourage CMS to show consistency with its own statements.

Delay in Implementation of ICD-10 System

As a result of the April 1, 2014 passage of *the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014* the implementation of ICD-10 codes was delayed from October 1, 2014 until no sooner than October 1, 2015. An interim final rule indicating the new implementation date for ICD-10 codes will be released in the future.

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 in participation on the advisory councils.

AOPAVersity – Your Education Center

Mastering Medicare: Essential Coding and Billing Techniques Seminar

AOPA has presented the Essential Coding & Billing Seminar in New Orleans, Las Vegas and Boston so far in 2014. The next, and last seminar of 2014, will be held in St. Louis, Missouri on October 20th and 21st.

The 2015 Essential Coding & Billing Techniques Seminar schedule has not been finalized. As dates and locations are finalized we will publish this information on the AOPA website, and in the next AOPA Staff Report.

AOPA Mastering Medicare Webinars

AOPA continues to produce its monthly Mastering Medicare series, and in an attempt to meet the needs of our membership, AOPA has begun to present these seminars on a web-based platform. These one hour, interactive sessions provide AOPA with the opportunity to communicate important information about current issues affecting the AOPA membership. It is not too late to register for the last two webinars of 2014:

November 12: Gift, Showing Appreciation without Violating the Law
December 10: New Codes and Changes for 2015

The 2015 AOPA Mastering Medicare Webinar schedule has not been finalized. As topics are finalized we will publish this information on the AOPA website, and in the next AOPA Staff Report.

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

O&P Almanac

Starting the 3rd quarter of the year, the July issue of The O&P Almanac was the first issue of the re-launched and redesigned marketing image for the *O&P Almanac* brand. The issue covered O&P Extreme Sports, a Mobility Saves Survey, Prior Authorization Information, and the state of O&P in a legislative and regulatory update. The extreme sports piece focused on getting patients into the water for summer activities and sports with practitioner tips for fitting, minimizing component corrosion, and more. The monthly “This Just In” on the CMS proposed Prior Authorization policy showed that a poorly constructed prior authorization system with no guarantee of reimbursement or relief from RAC audits could further slow review requests and complicate or delay patient care. It was a very effective re-launch issue that had two articles, one on reimbursement and the other on compliance, qualify for a total of 4 business credits to readers answering the quiz.

AOPA's August issue featured the 2014 National Assembly preview, exhibitor directory, and product showcase while also splashing a compelling cover story on Adrienne Haslet-Davis, Boston marathon amputee bombing survivor, dancer, and keynote speaker at the 2014 AOPA National Assembly. As a special feature, the magazine also featured a “This Just In” on another burning member engagement issue, “The hard-line approach to OTS”, which took a stand on the proposed CMS regulations which again inappropriately expanded the definition of off-the-shelf orthotic devices eligible for competitive bidding and changing the role of orthotic fitters. Other highlights revealed the member involvement on the Prior Authorization proposal and a feature story on understanding the hurdles to various treatment options with new devices.

The September *O&P Almanac* had a huge groundswell of reader feedback on the “Growing Strong” story honed on pediatrics. Becoming an advocate for your pediatric patients' physical and emotional development improves care and fosters positive long-term relationships. This was a great human interest piece which went over very well as the Assembly issue included in each attendee's registration bag. The month's pressing news item was on audit reform. Officially known as the Medicare DMEPOS Audit Improvement and Reform Act, HR 5083 (AIR), aims to improve by recognizing documentation of the prosthetist and orthotist as part of the medical record, separating DME from O&P in data reporting on claims and exclude claims that have been denied and are being appealed in calculating error rates.

As a bonus in September's headlines, AOPA had big sessions and big insights from the 2014 National Assembly previewed in the issue. Panelists from several of the most anticipated sessions at this year's AOPA National Assembly shared takeaways on vital business topics and where to find more resources. As a part of the new *O&P Almanac*, this was the first issue to feature the Tech Tutor story, written by Brad Mattear, and this received an overwhelming amount of praise due to the column's efforts to promote the advancements occurring within the technician profession. It will surely pave the way to more articles!

On the horizon, the 4th Quarter of the *O&P Almanac* will reveal highlights from the Assembly in the October issue as well as cover story piece on Osseointegration and the efforts being made within the USA to highlight this groundbreaking science. The October issue will also feature news on the O&P Future Conference which will invite Executives to convene on a leadership conference sharing ideas about the future of O&P. The November issue will cover Pedorthic issues featuring the Foot Care Buyer's Guide;

this issue will also have a significant bonus distribution to the Podiatric Footcare Association's Annual Symposium. And to wrap up the 2014 year, December will be an exclusive on upgrading patient treatment models and the new codes to come in 2015.

Online Communications

Social media is rapidly becoming a "must do" in communicating to all audiences and AOPA's communications strategy includes a slice of the most popular social media now being used by millions of Americans, including a growing following in the O&P field by both patients and providers. Here's a status report on AOPA's progress to date.

Facebook

In this quarter, AOPA's Facebook has garnered a total of 2,658 followers. In the coverage period of the 2013 AOPA O&P World Congress, Facebook had a daily ticker of 400 – 500 viewers/followers on news posts and pictures. For example, the kickoff ribbon cutting at the National Assembly without any paid promotion received 392 viewers. A creative post that shows some of the life of AOPA gets a good following. Beyond this post, we've received a high click-thru rating for followers to take action with Mobility Saves and various human interest stories (most specifically relating to 3-D printing).

Constant Contact

Via Constant Contact in the 3rd Quarter, AOPA has had much breaking news to release to Membership and the O&P Industry including: DoD Research Announcement, Member engagement on OTS and Prior Authorization, Annual Business Meeting Elections, and various educational offering. Sending regularly to E-mail lists of 4,000 to over 10,000, has yielded an average 21% open rate with the highest open rate of 57% for the Duckworth Webinar Fundraiser featuring an opportunity for folks to sign up and speak with Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth.

Twitter

AOPA's Twitter Fan Page has earned a total of 2,089 followers and 1,579 users who have Twitter Handles for their O&P Facilities. Using short URL's and quick links has been highly useful on Twitter to promote awareness to certain web pages such as: Prior Authorization, *O&P Almanac* Quiz Archive, OTS, Voting in the ABM, and the Mobility Saves public relations campaign. Beyond that, we feature human interest stories to also promote awareness within O&P sports, emerging technologies, and patients in the spotlight. Many students/professionals follow and contact @AmericanOandP via direct messages giving high praise to our work in the industry.

The Website

Search terms relating to the 2014 National Assembly and the Almanac continued to be at the top of the keyword lists. The Job Board, digital version of the Almanac, and the link to the Assembly site are the top three locations people go to.

Top Three Links:

Digital version of Almanac <http://bit.ly/1cm7j8B>

Mobility Saves: www.mobilitysaves.org

Assembly: www.aopanet.org/education/2014-assembly/

2014 Las Vegas National Assembly – A Winner Take All!

Over 2,200 O&P professionals gathered in Las Vegas for the 97th Annual AOPA National Assembly, September 4-7. The meeting kicked off on Thursday with 32 Manufacturer workshops and a fun welcome reception sponsored by WillowWood. Attendees enjoyed a free gift from our sponsor, a souvenir beer mug and photo opportunities with The Vegas King Himself, Elvis Presley.

The Friday morning opening session began with an inspiring speech by Adrienne Haslet-Davis who shared her personal story and her wholehearted thanks and the support given by O&P practitioners. As part of the opening session, Ted Thranhardt, CPO (E) added the personal family touch by moderating the Thranhardt Lectures.

Exhibiting Companies rolled out the red carpet and pulled all stops to make the trade show fun, informative and entertaining. Attendees enjoyed refreshments, giveaways and product launches all while receiving continuing education credits.

Non-stop concurrent programs and more organized symposia offered top-notch education for all. Featured programming included:

- Mobility Saves Lives & Money
- O&P Symposium: Generational Factors in Residency Education
- Microprocessor Controlled Knees Symposium
- Step by Step Treatment Options for Pedorthists
- Orthotic Symposium: Challenges Flowing from a Successful Scoliosis Orthosis Trial
- Pedorthic Symposium: Team Approach to the Care of the Diabetic Foot
- Orthotic Symposium: Emerging Trends in Pediatric Orthotic Management
- Symposium: Growing Your O&P Practice Revenue in a No-Growth Environment
- Orthotic Symposium: Cranial Remodeling Treatment: What Does the Evidence Tell Us?
- This Just In, offered twice

Attendees enjoyed many networking opportunities including: 7th Annual O&P Wine Tasting & Auction, Welcome Reception, Exhibitor Sponsored Happy Hour, Closing Extravaganza, and the Thranhardt Golf Classic!

Assembly Photo Album

Take a moment to relive some of the fun or see what you missed by perusing the Assembly's online photo album.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/aopaevents/sets/>

Congratulations Award Winners

- The honor of the Lifetime Achievement Award was bestowed upon Karl Fillauer, CPO.
- The Thranhardt Lecture Series winners are as follows:
 - Nicoleta Bugnariu, PT, PhD - *Functional Performance and Evaluation of Dynamic Response Feet*
 - Andreas Hahn, PhD, MSc - *Evaluation of 1200+ C-Leg Test Fittings in Germany*
- The winner of the Sam E. Hamontree, CP, Business Education Award was Mike Mallaro, CFO, CPA - *Build a Stronger Business: Megatrends Impacting Your O&P Practice and What You Need to Do Now to Optimize Your Business*
- The winner of the 3rd Annual Technical Fabrication Contest was Nicole Gibson of the University of Michigan.

- AOPA had its first graduating class of the Business Certificate Program, Jennifer Porter and Sarah Marich of Northeast Orthotics & Prosthetics
- The winner of the Otto & Lucille Becker Orthotic Abstract Poster Award was Lauren Levey, MSPO of Georgia Tech - *Lateralization of Motor Control in the Lower Extremity*
- The winner of the Edwin & Kathryn Arbogast Prosthetic Abstract Poster Award was Steven Siebert of Georgia Tech - *A Wireless Instrumented AFO to Quantify Ankle Stiffness and Range of Motion*

Exhibiting Companies rolled out the red carpet and pulled all stops to make the trade show fun with refreshments and giveaways.

- The winner of the \$5,000 Cash Giveaway was Erin Cammarata of CBS Billing & Consulting LLC.
- The winners of the Exhibit Hall Game Card Challenge were Danielle Smith & Taiki Watanabe.

2014 Exhibitors

Need contact information for an exhibitor at the show? Visit <http://www.aopanet.org/education/2015-assembly/2014-exhibitors-list/> for a complete list of Assembly Exhibitors.

2014 Title Sponsors

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2014 First Swing Clinic Sponsored by AOPA and OPAF

Pre show events included a First Swing Amputee Golf Clinic and the ever-popular Thranhardt Golf Classic. Five amputees from the Las Vegas area participated in the First Swing Clinic at Desert Pines Golf Course prior to the Thranhardt Classic. The three hour clinic included golf professionals, physical and recreational therapists and the physically challenged to teach, learn and enjoy the challenging game of golf. One First Swing participant said it best::

“Great program to introduce challenged folks to a life changing game.”

Many thanks to the volunteers and sponsoring organizations that made this event possible.

2014 Thranhardt Classic

On Wednesday, September 3rd in the hot desert sun, fifty-six dedicated golfers teed off for the Annual Thranhardt Classic at the Desert Pines Golf Course. This year, tournament play moved to the day prior to the start of educational programming to allow for more participation. Golfers enjoyed the new competitive games, including the chance to win \$10,000! As a rare treat, golfers also enjoyed the company of tournament namesake, Ted Thranhardt, CPO (E), and his wife Loretta.

Proceeds from the Thranhardt Classic benefit the inspiring efforts of OPAF and the legislative, research and education efforts of the Capitol Connection to further the O&P policy agenda.

Again, thanks to all the hole sponsors and volunteers who made this event happen.

Audio Conferences are now Webinars

As of August 2014, AOPA's monthly Mastering Medicare Audio conferences transitioned to monthly webinars featuring both a visual and an audio component. The important topics remain the same, as does the price of \$99 members, \$199 nonmembers.

O&P Business Certification Program – New 2015 Curriculum Coming Soon

The first two graduates of the Business Certificate Program completed their coursework at the 2014 Assembly – Sarah Marich and Jennifer Porter of Northeast Orthotics & Prosthetics. The 2015 curriculum is coming soon with changes that will make some of the training available online, making the curriculum easier to complete.

Mobility Saves Lives and Money!

That's what it's all about – getting the word out to our referral sources, patients, policy makers, our colleagues and the media that timely O&P care in addition to saving lives also saves money in the long run for payers and patients. This not surprising fact was confirmed by Medicare's own data analyzed by the respected health care consulting firm, Dobson DaVanzo. Once these results were known, the challenge became, how do we share them with the people who count? That challenge gave birth to the Mobility Saves project which launched the website, www.mobilitysaves.org. Everything you wanted to know and tell about the positive impact O&P services have on patient outcomes and costs resides on this site. Patient brochures about the basics of O&P care, separate slide presentations geared for each target audience, patient testimonials and the Medicare savings "calculator" that minute by minute posts the dollar amount O&P care has saved Medicare since January 1, 2014, are all tools available to AOPA members free of charge.

A Video News Release consisting of a three minute pre-packaged story accompanied by four minutes of "b-roll" filmed at an AOPA member patient care facility has been sent to nationwide media sources and is also available at the Mobility Saves website.

Mobility Saves brought AOPA and O&P into the social media world with Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube being among the outreach tools used to spread the good word. Regular postings bring a new message to followers and friends every week. The effort is in collaboration with the Amputee Coalition that commissioned the original Dobson DaVanzo study with funding from AOPA. Mobility Saves is not a one shot, one year project but a continuing work in progress adding new information and materials almost weekly. It's becoming the "go to" place for patients and providers and ultimately, payers and policy makers. Stay tuned, it's one of the best tools every developed for elevating the presence of O&P.

Survival Imperative Updates

Stream 1-Longitudinal Study-Mayo Clinic Project – Paul Prusakowski, CPO, Stream Leader

Further progress includes potential collaboration with the American Joint Replacement Registry (AJRR), currently being developed through the Mayo Clinic. An AOPA delegation has been invited to visit AJRR headquarters in Chicago to view their project first hand. There appears to be tremendous interest in registry participation by both hospitals and manufacturers.

Stream 2-Outcomes/Evidence Based Practice-Final Report – James Campbell, PhD, CO, Stream Leader

The trans-tibial prosthetics systematic review was submitted to the JRRD in July and is currently under review for potential publication. 22 of the 31 evidence statements were supported by level 2 evidence and the remaining 8 evidence statements were supported by level 1 evidence. The Mobility Saves project may be another way to raise awareness of the study.

The stroke systematic review will be submitted for review and publication during Fall 2014.

The AOPA Board has invited input for direction regarding selection of a new topic for additional systematic review and selecting a single project for about \$75,000 in funding was suggested. The Board agreed to fund ongoing systematic review projects based on recommendations made by Dr. Campbell who will provide several options to the Board which will approve one or more topics via email consultation.

Stream 3-Cost & Comparative Effectiveness-Final Report – Charles Dankmeyer, CPO, Stream Leader

Dobson DaVanzo has completed work on several additional cost effectiveness studies on patients who received OTS devices followed by custom fitted or fabricated devices. One preliminary data outcome was a report that 19% of patients who initially received an OTS orthoses subsequently received a custom fitted or fabricated device. Dobson DaVanzo also analyzed data regarding the overall healthcare costs for K1/K2 patients vs K3/K4 patients and results indicate that K1/K2 patients have higher overall health care costs, but further investigation on this, as well as the impact of Medicare Part D drug date on total cost effectiveness are being advanced.

Stream 4-Education and Communication – Scott Schneider, Stream Leader

Many of the objectives of have been realized through the development of the Mobility Saves project but it is important to make sure that message continues to be developed and distributed. Meetings are being arranged with several major payers to discuss the economic value of O&P care and intervention and assistance will be requested in developing the proper message to present to payers.

Stream 5-Health Care Alliances-AAPMR – Michael Oros, CPO, Stream Leader

A letter on behalf of the AOPA Board was sent to American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AAPMR) asking to establish a dialogue between the Boards. A preliminary discussion has taken place between AOPA's executive director and the counterpart executive at AAPMR and with AAPMR's Washington representation but discussions remain in the early stage.

Stream 6-Risks/Reimbursement – Dave McGill, Stream Leader

Several educational programs have been presented to AOPA members over the last year and the goal for the next several months will be to create an action plan to create deliverable items for AOPA and its members.

Oh Yes, We Really Need You in 2015

We hope this summary of AOPA's role and actions on behalf of you and the O&P community helps you better understand the tremendous demand on resources that a full-fledged advocacy effort requires in addition to the ongoing services you have learned to expect from AOPA over the years. Improvements such as converting our popular series of audio conferences into webinars, launching the Mobility Saves website and its many "spread the word" elements and a heightened social media presence are all designed to bring greater value to you in return for your annual investment. Don't forget, in addition to those free online CE opportunities, you can now get up to four CE's by reading and answering a quiz based on the *O&P Almanac's* Reimbursement Page and the Compliance Corner.

If you haven't already received your renewal invoice, you can renew online at www.AOPAnet.org and prevent any disruption to your valuable benefits. In addition to your dues supporting AOAP's advocacy efforts on behalf of O&P, you'll be able to continue access to our coding and billing experts, members-only 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.

And while you're online, you can edit your membership record to add affiliate locations, add or edit employee records, and update your contact information. Add employee email addresses to make sure everyone in your office receives breaking news alerts from AOPA about our regulatory news, and other events affecting your business. While you are on AOPAnet.org, peruse the AOPAiversity online educational offerings, including our Online Video Learning Center, which has free presentations eligible for Continuing Education Credits. For a copy of your invoice or AOPAnet login information, please contact Betty Leppin at BLEppin@AOPAnet.org or (571) 431-0843.

Thank you for your loyal support.

Sincerely,



Thomas F. Fise, JD
Executive Director