

AOPA 1st Quarter 2020 Staff Report



To: AOPA Membership
From: Eve Lee, Executive Director
Date: April 10, 2020

We have been taking your calls and emails and hearing firsthand how extremely difficult and uncertain things are for you, your businesses, and your patients. Please know, the AOPA Board and staff are here to support you so that you can continue to provide quality care to your patients.

To date, we have been in contact with legislators about how they can best support the O&P profession. We have been providing guidance on regulations like documentation, telehealth, and stay at home orders. We have pulled together (and update regularly) a set of resources. We have created a space on the Co-OP for you to share your experiences and strategies with one another.

All of this can be found on the [COVID-19 Responses and Resources webpage](#). We will continue to update this webpage frequently with actions, guidance, and resources as well as pushing out updates via email, Smartbrief, and our social media channels.

If you haven't registered for Monday's COVID-19 Townhall yet, I encourage you to do so. This your opportunity to ask questions regarding operations during COVID-19 as well as to share your experiences with other members. [Register here](#)

Thank you for all you continue to do for your patients and the O&P profession. If you have questions, concerns, or needs do not hesitate to reach out to any of the staff at info@AOPAnet.org.

Continue to stay safe and well.

2020 National Assembly

The Assembly Planning Committee hopes you are safely practicing social distancing and considering how great it will be to network with your peers this September at the 2020 National Assembly to be held in Las Vegas, Sept. 9-12.

AOPA is working to bring you a stellar program, productive networking events and of course the largest O&P exhibit hall in North America. A high-profile faculty will provide education on topics such as:

- ✓ Orthotic Management of Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis
- ✓ Innovations in Limb Loss Rehabilitation
- ✓ Orthotic Management for the Pediatric Patient
- ✓ Wound Care for orthotics, prosthetics and pedorthics
- ✓ Treating the Geriatric Patient
- ✓ Behavioral Science in O&P
- ✓ Prior Authorization
- ✓ A Fireside Chat with Medicare—bring your questions
- ✓ Relevant updates on compliance, billing and regulatory news
- ✓ Dealing with the aftermath of COVID-19

- ✓ Additive Manufacturing- Creating a physical object from a digital design!
- ✓ O&P Fab Lab Safety
- ✓ OSHA and FDA Compliance for the Lab

The Assembly is known for hosting the most prominent and successful professionals in the field—why not join them? The full program will be available late-May 2020. The schedule and travel information are available at www.aopaassembly.org.

Legislative and Regulatory

Legislative Updates

COVID Legislation

As the third COVID bill took shape, AOPA worked with Congress to ensure that O&P is included in proposals to provide companies affected by the virus with federally guaranteed loans at low rates. In addition, we worked to ensure O&P businesses would have clear access to the \$349 billion in forgivable bridge loans for small businesses and ensuring that authorizing language would cover contracted employees at hospitals, such as orthotists and prosthetists.

AOPA strongly supported language that temporarily lifts the Medicare sequester, which reduces payments to providers by two percent, from May 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020, and we worked with Congress on language that directs the Secretary of Health & Human Services to develop a comprehensive and coordinated plan to identify workforce projection needs.

Finally, AOPA was able to include language in the bill to ensure Veterans can receive care from their choice of practitioner throughout the crisis. Specifically, the bill says “The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that, to the extent practicable, veterans who are receiving or are eligible to receive a prosthetic appliance...are able to receive such an appliance that the Secretary determines is needed from a non-Department of Veterans Affairs provider under a contract with the Department during a public health emergency.” This is especially timely for our industry as the VA recently announced it would discontinue offering nonurgent community care referrals to veterans during the coronavirus pandemic.

On April 1, AOPA held a webinar to help guide our members through the financial relief included in the bill; more than 200 members attended.

Medicare O&P Patient-Centered Care Act

On November 22, 2019, the House of Representatives introduced the Medicare O&P Patient-Centered Care Act. Reps. Mike Thompson (D-CA), GT Thompson (R-PA), GK Butterfield (D-NC), and Brett Guthrie (R-KY) were the bills original sponsors, and since then Reps. Jeff Van Drew (R-NJ), David Roe (R-TN), and Joyce Beatty (D-OH) have also joined the bill.

In the Senate, we continue to work towards a Republican lead on the bill. Prior to the COVID pandemic, we had been making solid inroads with Senators Ben Sasse (R-NE) and Steve Daines (R-MT). Sen. Sasse’s staff has expressed a strong willingness to work with us on the bill, and Sen. Daines is in a tough reelection fight and his staff has indicated he’s looking for legislative wins to boost his profile.

Wounded Warrior Workforce Education Act

AOPA staff and consultants continue to work closely with the Senate to move the WWWEA forward. Late last year we shifted our strategy away from the Veteran’s Affairs committee and to the Armed Services committee, with the goal of including revised WWWEA language in the National Defense Authorization Act, which Congress must pass every year. In late February, Sens. Rick Scott (R-FL), Richard Durbin (D-IL), and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) all submitted our updated language in their NDAA requests, and we have assurances that Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI), chair of the Armed Services committee (and a supporter of the WWWEA) will work with his Republican colleagues to include the language in the final bill. That said,

as COVID continues to take up all of Congress' time, it's unclear when serious work on the NDAA might begin.

State-level Advocacy

AOPA became heavily involved in Virginia Insurance Fairness legislation that would expand the current law to include access to microprocessor and myoelectric technology. We were asked by the Virginia Orthotics and Prosthetics Association for support during the hearings on bills in both the House and Senate. We had a 48-hour notice that we would need to prepare testimony and be present to testify in support of Delegate Danica Roem's bill for the first subcommittee hearing. Ashlie White drafted testimony, and staff traveled to Richmond for three separate hearings on the bill.

Because of a quirk in Virginia law, any bill that would change Medicaid is subject to a review by the Health Insurance Reform Commission (HIRC) that can take up to a year. However, HIRC has informed the Legislature that the bill needed no further review as it didn't change Medicaid, it merely amplified an existing statute. Even so, the House declined to pass the bill, referring it back to HIRC. The Senate, conversely, sided with AOPA and moved the bill forward unanimously, with the lead Senator noting it was simply "the right thing to do." This sent the bill back to the House; AOPA recruited Peggy Chenowith, a patient-advocate living in Virginia, to provide testimony, and once again provided our own. Unfortunately, the same House committee once again ruled the bill must sit before HIRC for a period of one year.

While we were unsuccessful this year, there are two pieces of good news: 1) with no more bureaucratic roadblocks in the way, the bill is sure to pass next year, and 2) we were able to work with Delegate Roem to overhaul the way bills are referred to HIRC to prevent the red tape from stopping vital bills like this in the future. The HIRC is now required to have quarterly meetings, and pass legislation in a timelier fashion.

AOPA State Reps Network Update

AOPA State Reps met on January 29, 2020 for their Q1 conference call. Individuals representing 23 states were present on the call and shared information about the issues facing O&P providers in their states. State-specific updates have been added to the state pages on the AOPA Co-OP. The next State Reps meeting was originally scheduled to be in person during the AOPA Policy Forum, but due to the COVID-19 crisis, the meeting will now be held virtually on Friday, May 1.

O&P Political Action Committee

AOPA would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to the O&P PAC in 2020:

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All in-person PAC events were cancelled beginning in mid-March. Our disbursements to that point were as follows:

- Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee - \$2,500. This allowed us extended facetime with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and DCCC Chairwoman Cheri Bustos (D-IL).
- Rep. GT Thompson (R-PA), lead sponsor of the O&P Patient-Centered Care Act - \$1,000
- Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) – likely incoming chair of the House Appropriations Committee

2020 Policy Forum

As you have hopefully heard, the 2020 Policy Forum will take place virtually given COVID-19. Stay tuned for more details. Our voices are louder together.

Regulatory Updates

In response to the declaration of a public health emergency (PHE) due to COVID-19, the Centers for

Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has suspended most Medicare fee-for-service medical review activity (audits) for the duration of the PHE. The suspension of audits includes pre-payment reviews by the DME MACs under the Targeted Probe and Educate (TPE) program, and post payment reviews by the DME MACs and Supplemental Medical Review Contractor (SMRC). Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) audits, both complex and automated, have also been suspended. Any claims that were currently under review by the DME MAC, SMRC or RAC were to be suspended and released from review.

Prior Authorization Implementation was Delayed

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced several temporary regulatory waivers intended “to equip the American health care system with maximum flexibility to respond to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.” Included in the announcement was a notice that CMS will pause the national DMEPOS prior authorization program for certain DMEPOS. Prior authorization was scheduled for implementation for six lower limb prosthesis codes L5856, L5857, L5858, L5973, L5980, and L5987) in four states (PA, MI, TX, and CA) on May 11, 2020 and nationwide on October 8, 2020. This pause will allow Medicare providers to continue to focus on providing medically necessary, clinically appropriate O&P care to Medicare beneficiaries without having to dedicate valuable resources to unfamiliar processes and documentation requirements.

CMS Waives Certain Enrollment Procedures

In response to COVID-19, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) used its authority to make temporary modifications to the enrollment process for all DMEPOS suppliers:

- CMS and the National Supplier Clearing House (NSC) will expedite any pending or new applications received on or after March 1, 2020. If there are no issues with your CMS-855S form your application will be processed within 7 business days (if submitted online), and 14 business days (if submitted by paper)
- CMS and the NSC will be waiving the following screening requirements for all enrollment applications received on or after March 1, 2020: the supplier application fee, criminal background checks, and site visits.
- CMS and the NSC will be posting all revalidation actions and deadlines.
- CMS is postponing all accreditation and reaccreditation timetables and deadlines

If you have any questions about how these waivers and modifications effect your current or future enrollment applications contact the NSC at 1-866-238-9652. This toll-free line was established specifically for questions about the above-mentioned waivers. If you have specific questions about the postponing of accreditation timetables and deadlines, you may want to contact your accrediting organization directly.

AFO/KAFO Local Coverage Determination (LCD) and Policy Article (PA) Revisions

The four DME MACs revised the AFO/KAFO Local Coverage Determination (LCD) and Policy Article (PA) in February 2020. Many of the revisions were clerical in nature, such as changing “ordering physician” to “treating practitioner” and updating the policy with the standard written order (SWO) instructions. However, the PA did contain some significant revisions. The PA updated its coding guidelines for the L1906 and introduced new coding guidelines for 16 AFOs: L1900, L1902, L1904, L1907, L1910, L1920, L1930, L1932, L1940, L1945, L1950, L1951, L1970, L1971, L1980, and L1990. The LCD and PA also updated the code descriptor of L2006 based on a recent quarterly HCPCS update. The new code descriptor for L2006 now reads: Knee, ankle, foot device, any material, single or double upright, swing and stance phase microprocessor control with adjustability, included all components (e.g. sensors, batteries, charger), any type activation, with or without ankle joint(s), custom fabricated. The previous code descriptor read “swing and/or stance phase microprocessor control.

Lower Limb Prostheses Local Coverage Determination (LCD) and Policy Article (PA) Revisions

On March 12, 2020 the DME MACs released a revised Lower Limb Prostheses Policy. Many of the revisions were clerical and organizational in nature, such as listing out all codes instead of printing them in ranges, changing “ordering physician” to “treating practitioner”, and updating the policy with the new standard written order (SWO) instructions. The PA was reorganized to have direct headings and sections

for knees, sockets, ankles and feet. The PA also includes information that was previously published via DME MAC & PDAC correct coding announcements.

PDAC Coding Verification for L3960

The DME MACs and PDAC released a joint announcement for a new coding verification requirement for L3960 (SEWHO, abduction positioning, airplane design, prefabricated, includes fitting and adjustment). For all claims with a date of service on or after August 1, 2020 the only braces which may be billed using L3960 must have a written PDAC coding verification and listed on the PDAC Product Classification list.

The joint announcement also included new coding guidelines for the L3960. According to the announcement the L3960 is used for abducting the arm away from the body and capable of immobilizing the shoulder, elbow, wrist, and hand. It contains adjustable rigid cuffs and joints/components to optimize the shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand angles; the shoulder position is capable of 90 degrees abduction from torso. It also contains adjustable rigid chest and pelvic frames, or panels supports shoulder and arm components; and the L3960 is considered all-inclusive of soft interface and closures/straps.

Research

AOPA Co-OP, the Compendium of O&P

There are currently over 550 AOPA members using the Co-OP and contributing to the O&P knowledge base. AOPA Supplier Members that are part of the [Supplier Plus Program](#) can now include links directly to product-specific webpages on company sites within the [L Code Search](#) section.

In an effort to provide as much information as possible during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, COVID-19-specific updates have been added to relevant pages across the Co-OP. Members are also sharing internal documents and policies developed to address the COVID-19 Pandemic on the [Member to Member](#) page.

If you haven't signed up for the Co-OP, or if you have questions about this free member benefit, there are several opportunities to learn about O&P's most comprehensive resource for coding, billing, and reimbursement during the monthly Co-OP tutorials. [Register now using the drop-down menu to select one of the following dates: April 17, May 15, June 19.](#) Members can find more information or activate a Co-OP account at www.AOPAnet.org/co-op.

Medical Advisory Board Updates

AOPA is excited to announce that Frank Vicari, MD, FACS, FAAP, Chief of Pediatric Plastic Surgery/Craniofacial Surgery and Director of the Head Shape Evaluation Program at Advocate Children's Hospital in Illinois, has joined the AOPA Medical Advisory Board.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the upcoming Medical Advisory Board meetings originally scheduled for May 27-28 will be reschedule for a later date.

Prosthetics 2020

AOPA is excited to welcome Amputee Associates as the newest supporter of the Prosthetics 2020 Program, also known as P2020. Amputee Associates will join the Medical Advisory Board Steering Committee for Prosthetics along with other P2020 supporters.

Orthotics 2020

Orthotics 2020 workgroups for Plagiocephaly, Spinal Injury, Post-Stroke, Osteoarthritis and Scoliosis have been reengaged to explore evidence gaps and practice needs in these six areas of orthotic intervention. A sixth condition-specific category, neurological disorders, has been added to the Orthotics 2020 program initiatives by the Medical Advisory Board, and a new workgroup will be formed in the coming months. Options for a new round of RFPs will be explored by the group during the next Medical Advisory Board meeting. If you are interested in joining any of the O2020 workgroups please email AWhite@AOPAnet.org.

The Center for O&P Learning (COPL)

The 2020 COPL Pilot Grant RFP deadline has been extended till May 21, 2020, due to the COVID-19 crisis.

The following topic list reflects areas where evidence generation is needed.

1. Study/develop outcomes measures, evaluation of clinical benefit, and quality of life metrics related to orthotic management (Note: submissions should be pathology and/or condition appropriate, e.g. Stroke, Cerebral Palsy, Multiple Sclerosis, Polio, OA)
2. Demonstrate methods to record primary health outcomes such as falls and lower back pain in amputees.
3. Study novel innovations around choice of socket during prosthetic intervention. Factors should include cost savings, adaptability, patient-preference, etc.
4. Study the functional impacts and proven clinical benefits of vacuum-assisted socket suspension systems, elevated vacuum. Develop guidelines and clinical decision support for elevated vacuum suspension systems.
5. Develop a validated instrument to assess prosthetic interface (socket, liner, and suspension) fit, comfort and performance.
6. Documentation of the clinical efficacy of spinal orthoses as and treatment intervention for traumatic spinal injury.
7. Study the current prosthetic prescribing patterns with respect to goal-oriented care and longitudinal clinical outcomes.
8. Study health inequity/health disparity within orthotic and prosthetic patient populations.
9. Study transitional care; changes in orthotic care as patient transitions from pediatric to adult care models (brace design, payer policies)
10. Prevalence/Incidence of chronic wound progressing to amputation.

Additionally, there is an open topic for proposals that do not fit the topic list above. The call for proposals and online application can be found [here](#).

Education

AOPAversity Mastering Medicare Webinars

Webinars are scheduled for 1:00 PM eastern time on the second Wednesday of each month. The webinars are \$99 each for members and \$199 for non-members. Members can sign up for the 2020 webinars for only \$990 and get two free. [Sign up](#). The webinars are a great way to boost employee morale (by providing monthly staff education event) and provide needed education and earn CE Credits. The 2020 AOPAversity Mastering Medicare Webinar series titles and dates are below:

May 13 - Social Media Mayday: Increase Your Footprint

June 10 - New Technical Credits- Clinician's Corner: Prosthetics

July 8 - The ABCs of Appeals: Know the Players and Get the Tips

August 12 - Contracting 101: Understanding the Basics

September 2 - Outside the Norms: Outliers and Situations Where the Rules are Different

October 14 - New Technical Credits- Clinician's Corner: Fitters and Techs

November 11 - RAC Audits: What Are They Looking At?

December 9 -New Year: New Codes, Fees, and Updates

All previous webinars are available for purchase as a recording:

January 8 - Modifiers: Enhance Your Claims Two Letters at a Time

February 12 - O&P Coding & Billing Myths: The Truth is Out There

March 11 - New Technical Credits- Clinician's Corner: Orthotics

April 8 - A Policy Review: LSO/TLSO

Questions about registration contact Ryan Gleeson at rgleeson@AOPAnet.org, questions about webinar content contact Devon Bernard at dbernard@AOPAnet.org.

AOPAversity Essential Coding & Billing Techniques Seminar

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

This seminar now contains a new section on the creation of policies and procedures for your facility, and information on the new Standard Written Order (SWO) requirements, and information on Medicare's new prior authorization program for certain DMEPOS. Implementation of prior authorization may be paused, but it is not going away, get ready for it.

The next seminar is scheduled for July 20-21, 2020 at the Fairfield Inn & Suites Charlotte Uptown in Charlotte, NC. [Register today!](#) [Book your hotel](#) by July 6 for \$149/night rate.

Questions about registration contact Ryan Gleeson at rgleeson@AOPAnet.org, questions about seminar content contact Devon Bernard at dbernard@AOPAnet.org.

Online AOPAversity Learning Center

AOPAversity Learning Management System – NEW FREE Member Access

With the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), we are in uncertain times and as a result your business and employees' needs are evolving. As we continue to explore resources to help the profession navigate this unprecedented situation, we looked to our long-established strength in offering immediate solutions to best support our members. AOPA has guided the training and development of the O&P profession for over a century. With the complexity of all you are facing, including teleworking, we would like to offer our AOPA member's employees the ability to access our learning management system, AOPAversity, not just at a discount, but completely FREE.

All 72 online offerings are pre-recorded videos available on demand. That's 33 business offerings worth 34.5 Business Credits and 39 clinical offerings worth 60.5 Scientific Credits. FREE.

Don't already have an AOPAversity profile? Visit bit.ly/createAOPA to create a profile. You will need your member ID when you create your profile in order to access the free offering. Already have a profile. Visit bit.ly/loginAOPA to enter your profile. Your username is the email used to create your profile.

This FREE access offer is set valid through December 31, 2020. It does exclude any refunds to purchases made prior to the start of this offer.

Membership and Communications

New members include:

Suppliers: BLUEWAVE Technologies, Inc. in Orange City FL, and Phoenix Molded Shoes, Inserts, & Braces in Sebring FL.

Patient Care Facilities: Precision Prosthetics & Orthotics in Casper WY; Progressive in Tulsa, OK; Sola Prosthetics, Inc. in Prairieville, LA; University Hospitals in Mayfield Village, OH; and University of Colorado in Aurora, CO.

DATA DRIVES DECISIONS. HARNESS ITS POWER

The 2020 Operating Performance Survey will be mailed to AOPA patient care facility members in mid-May. Behind the scenes, the volunteer OPC working group met this quarter to review, revise and update the survey. Mark your calendar for May 17. Participation is FREE and limited to AOPA members.

Member Services Committee Meets

This newly formed committee of AOPA volunteers met at AOPA headquarters February 24th and 25th to kick off their work on advising the Board on services and products required to meet members' needs. The Committee will also advise AOPA staff as necessary for the successful implementation of programs. Read their Q1 report to the Board [here](#).

O&P Almanac

The January issue of the O&P Almanac introduced a new column, State by State, with monthly updates providing a closer look into how O&P practices can be affected with new or revised state and/ or local insurance policies. The January issue also featured guidance on how facilities can collect more outcome measure and seeking other changes to bolster business for the future, February's issue revealed that individuals with upper limb loss are seeking prosthetic solutions, and the options are growing. Upper-extremity specialists shared their experiences with advanced pattern recognition control technologies and new offerings in partial hands and digits as well as their predictions for the future of osseointegration and neuroprosthetics. March focused on healthcare professionals across the globe facing a new global health crisis—coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cautioned Americans to expect to see community spread in the United States. Given the uncertainties related to the novel virus infection, the March issue revisited infection control measures at O&P facilities. To read these issues visit <https://www.aopanet.org/publications/op-almanac-magazine/>.

AOPA is Social

Interact with AOPA and O&P professionals on social media. Get the latest AOPA and O&P news, network with others, watch videos, post photos and share your story. Follow us on Twitter, like us on Facebook and connect with us on LinkedIn. Play your part to bring more awareness to important O&P issues, use the hashtag #AOPA2020.

Education Calendar

- April 22 & 23 – Medicare 101 Seminar
- May 13 - Social Media Mayday: Increase Your Footprint
- June 10 - New Technical Credits- Clinician's Corner: Prosthetics
- July 8 - The ABCs of Appeals: Know the Players and Get the Tips
- **July 20 -21 – Coding & Billing Seminar, Charlotte, NC**
- August 12 - Contracting 101: Understanding the Basics
- September 2 - Outside the Norms: Outliers and Situations Where the Rules are Different
- **September 9-12 – National Assembly, Las Vegas, NV**
- October 14 - New Technical Credits- Clinician's Corner: Fitters and Techs
- November 1-7 – Corporate Compliance and Ethics Week
- **November 9-10 – Coding & Billing Seminar, Philadelphia, PA**
- November 11 - RAC Audits: What Are They Looking At?
- December 9 -New Year: New Codes, Fees, and Updates

***Bold indicates live event**