

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE OPTOMETRY OFFICER PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY GROUP ¹
(OPAG)

Teleconference Report – 11:07am to 12:45pm, Wednesday April 06, 2005

1. Attendees:

1.1. OPAG Members

- 1.1.1. CAPT Greg Ketcher (Chair)
- 1.1.2. CAPT Frank Behan (Absent)
- 1.1.3. CDR Carmen Palma (Vice-Chair)
- 1.1.4. CDR Mike Candreva
- 1.1.5. CDR Nancy Nichols (HSO PAC member and ex officio OPAG member)
- 1.1.6. LCDR Kim Lewandowski-Walker (OPAG secretary)
- 1.1.7. LCDR Barbara Massey

1.2. Guests

- 1.2.1. CAPT Richard Hatch (former Chief Clinical Consultant for Optometry)
- 1.2.2. CAPT Terry Schleisman (I.H.S. Clinical Training Coordinator and I.H.S. Chief Clinical Consultant for Optometry)

2. Meeting called to order at 11:07am

- 2.1.1. Approval of minutes from March 02, 2005 OPAG meeting performed via e-mail to OPAG members

3. Guest Reports

3.1. HSO-PAC Meeting – April 01, 2005

- 3.1.1. CDR Nancy Nichols attended the meeting via teleconference and gave the following report:

- 3.1.1.1. OCCO is developing a survey for determining officers' satisfaction with the services received from OCCO. The survey is being developed by an outside contractor and is supposed to be confidential. The survey proposal is currently at the Assistant Secretary for Health's office.

- 3.1.1.2. OCCO has lost personnel recently to extended sick leave and currently has a 25% vacancy rate. OCCO is currently on a hiring freeze.

- 3.1.1.3. The 2006 COA meeting is tentatively going to be held in Denver, Colorado.

- 3.1.1.4. Not all O.D.s who volunteered to be mentors through the HSO mentoring program were included on the list of potential mentors that was sent to CAPT Ketcher. CDR Nichols is investigating this issue.

- 3.1.1.5. The HSO Chief Professional Officer, CAPT Linda Morris Brown, is encouraging all officers to embrace the new PHS mission statement.

- 3.1.1.6. The CPO's of the different categories were not in favor of the 6th promotion precept. The issue is being reviewed by an OCCO workgroup.

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3.1.1.7. 70% of all officers currently meet readiness. Readiness not only needs to be achieved, but maintained. Officers up for promotion in 2005 who do not meet readiness by May 01, 2005 will be taken off the list and not promoted. No exceptions. However, the officers below the officer removed from the promotion list will not move up. Some statistics: 40% didn't meet requirements due to modules, 20% due to BLS, 16%, due to no PE form on file, and a number due to vaccinations. Please check your officer summary page on the ORFD website to ensure that you meet readiness and that none of your immunizations are going to expire before the May 01 deadline.

3.1.1.8. The nursing category is now the largest PHS category.

3.1.1.9. No news on transformation.

3.1.1.10 COERs are moving from a fiscal year to a calendar year.

3.1.1.11 PHS does not have a retention policy. One is currently being developed.

3.1.1.12 The status of the DMAT is currently unknown.

3.1.1.13 All HSOs are encouraged to periodically check the HSO website for news and information. Several improvements to the HSO website have been implemented.

3.1.1.14 The HSO PAC is developing a Readiness Liaison to reach out to officers.

3.1.1.15 HS-PAC will send all the PAG Chairs sample letters that could be sent to the OPF of their prospective committee members.

3.1.1.16 The next meeting of the HSO PAC is June 07, 2005 at the COA meeting in Philadelphia.

4. Old Business

4.1. Retention pay (ORSP)

4.1.1. Issue regarding prohibition of receiving ORSP while on loan repayment. Optometry is currently the only discipline that cannot receive retention pay concurrently with a loan repayment obligation. Issue on hold until summer 2005. OPAG will plan to address this issue with OCCO and I.H.S. after the promotion boards have met (June/July).

4.2. Medical Benefits – Care at I.H.S. Facilities update

4.2.1. The Acting Assistant Secretary for Health issued a letter regarding Tricare and receiving care at I.H.S. facilities. Officers and their dependants may continue to receive care at I.H.S. facilities, even if the facility is not part of the Tricare network, billed at the all-inclusive non-Medicare reimbursement rate. The exception to this policy is for officers serving in an area with a sufficient

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number of Tricare providers, specifically the Washington metropolitan area, the cities of Phoenix and Tucson, AZ; Albuquerque, NM; Lawton and Claremore, OK; and Rapid City, SD. Officers in these excepted areas are required to receive their medical and dental care from non-I.H.S. Tricare network providers unless they are otherwise eligible for care at the IHS facility (ie: Alaskan Native/American Indian).

4.2.2. CAPT Hatch reported that some I.H.S. facilities not in the excepted areas are still refusing to treat officers and their dependents. Officers are still encouraged to check with their service unit prior to receiving care to avoid receiving unexpected bills. If the service unit denies care or wishes to balance bill for the difference between the Tricare amount and the billed amount, contact your regional Commissioned Corps Liaison.

4.2.3. Officers wishing to keep abreast of Tricare news can obtain news and information at www.tricare.org

4.3. Transformation – nothing new to report.

4.4. Uniform Policies – nothing new to report.

4.5. OPAG Position Papers – currently on hold.

4.6. Selection of JOAG and COA Liaisons for OPAG – currently on hold until after the voting members for these organizations have been elected or chosen by the organization (JOAG and COA). All OPAG members were in favor of temporarily tabling this decision.

4.7. Title 38 – Civil Service Reclassification

4.7.1. Nothing new to report. The issue appears to be languishing at Headquarters.

4.7.2. There are currently 17 civil service optometrists within I.H.S.

4.7.3. Over the past year, I.H.S. has lost 3 civil service optometrists, including the recent loss of Dr. Golde in Parker, AZ.

4.7.4. CAPT Hatch, CAPT Schleisman, and CAPT Ketcher will continue to work on this issue.

5. New Business

5.1. The new PHS Mission Statement: “Protecting, promoting, and advancing the health and safety of the Nation.”

5.2. Selection of I.H.S. Chief Clinical Consultant for Optometry

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5.2.1. CAPT Terry Schleisman is the new I.H.S. Chief Clinical Consultant for Optometry, effective April 01, 2005. This selection was made by the Office of the Director for I.H.S. Congratulations to CAPT Schleisman.

5.3 OPAG Bylaws Update

5.3.1. The following issues in the OPAG Bylaws are under review by OPAG

5.3.1.1. Replacement of members – no need to address

5.3.1.2. Attendance Requirements – attendance at two thirds of meetings

5.3.1.3 OPAG Liaison appointments – already addressed in by-laws

5.3.1.4. Staggered terms of appointment – no need to change

5.3.1.4. Civil service representation – need to add representation for civil service, contract, and tribal optometrists.

5.3.2. CAPT Ketcher will work on drafts of the revised/clarified Bylaws for these issues and they will be discussed at the next OPAG meeting.

6. Career Development/Promotions/Awards

6.1 Permanent Promotions

6.1.1 For commissioned officers to be promoted in the 2005 cycle, officers must meet and maintain basic readiness. This applies for permanent and temporary promotions.

6.1.2 Officers not meeting basic readiness will not be recommended for permanent promotion.

6.1.3 The consequence of not being recommended for permanent promotion for two consecutive cycles may result in the loss of your temporary promotion.

6..2 Awards

6.2.1 CDR Palma has nominated one optometrist for the Stanley J. Kissel Award for Outstanding Health Services Professional of the Year.

6.2.2. CDR Palma has nominated one optometrist for the American Public Health Association Vision Care Section award.

6.2.3 The deadline for nominations for Joseph Garcia Jr. Award for Outstanding Junior Health Services Professional of the Year is April 15, 2005. To CDR Palma's knowledge, no O.D.s have been nominated as of yet.

6.2.4 OPAG wishes to encourage commissioned officers to nominate fellow officers and their subordinates for PHS Commissioned Officer Awards. Please recognize the accomplishments of your fellow officers.

6.2.5 Contact CDR Palma for assistance in nominating your fellow officers for PHS Awards.

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6.2.6 OPAG encourages all optometrists to become involved in the local or Area awards committees.

6.3 Communications

6.3.1 The Optometry Web Board has been developed. The address is <http://www.forum.ihs.gov/~optometry>. This Web Board will be used to post announcements regarding I.H.S./P.H.S. optometry.

6.3.2 The OPAG List-Serv is also being used to disseminate information to OPAG members. Documents on the List-Serv (operated by NIH) are archived and available for retrieval.

7 Meetings and Recruitment Activities

7.1 I.H.S. Flagstaff Meeting – 04/13 – 04/14/2005, Flagstaff Radisson Woodlands hotel.

7.2 COA – 06/06 – 06/10/2005 – CDR Palma is planning to attend and will give her report at the July OPAG meeting. CDR Nichols would like to know of any commissioned officers planning to attend.

7.3 AOA Convention – 06/22 – 06/25/2005. Tentative attendees include CAPT Ketcher, CDR Keith Cespon, and Dr. William Pierre. Funding has been made available for a recruitment booth. CDR Cespon will be invited to the July OPAG meeting to give a report

7.4 AMSUS – 10/30 – 11/04/2005 – Nashville, TN. CAPT Clifford Brown is planning to attend. There may not be any optometry CE offered at AMSUS in 2005, although no firm decision has been made. CAPT Brown will be invited to the December OPAG meeting to give a report.

7.5 IHS Eye Care Biennial 2006 Meeting – The next meeting is scheduled May 8-12, 2006 at the Southern California College of Optometry Fullerton campus. CAPT John Garber will again organize and conduct the continuing education program. The meeting is open to all I.H.S and PHS optometrists.

7.6 FSO – PHS may be requested to sponsor the FSO meeting in 2009. CDR Candreva will be attending the FSO meeting in November 7-10, 2005. The meeting hotel is the Shades of Green hotel in Orlando.

8 Action Items

8.1 CAPT Ketcher will develop drafts of the revised/clarified OPAG Bylaws and present these for review at the next OPAG meeting.

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8.2 CDR Nichols will investigate the disparity between the HSO mentor list and those who signed up to be mentors.

8.3 CAPT Ketcher, CAPT Schleisman, and CAPT Hatch will continue to work on getting an answer from I.H.S. Headquarters regarding Title 38 Pay - Civil Service Reclassification.

9 OPAG Meetings

9.1 Next meeting scheduled for May 04, 2005 at 11:00 CST.

9.1.1 CAPT Richard Hatch will be invited as a guest at the next meeting.

9.1.2 OPAG members should use the same conference call number and password

9.1.3 Meeting adjourned at 12:45 pm

Minutes prepared by LCDR Kimberly Lewandowski-Walker, FDA Representative to the OPAG

Distribution: HSO CPO, HSO PAC, PHS Optometry Officers.