

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

Conference Report – 4:00 – 4:45pm, Tuesday May 09, 2006

1. Attendees:

1.1. OPAG Members

- 1.1.1. CAPT Greg Ketcher (Chair)
- 1.1.2. CDR Carmen Palma (Vice-Chair)
- 1.1.3. CDR Mike Candreva
- 1.1.4. CDR Nancy Nichols (HSO PAC member and ex officio OPAG member)
- 1.1.5. CDR Kim Lewandowski-Walker (OPAG secretary/treasurer)
- 1.1.6. CDR Barbara Massey (via teleconference)
- 1.1.7. Dr. Michael Duenas (CDC Representative - Absent)

1.2. Guests - none

2. Meeting called to order at 4:00pm

- 2.1 Approval of minutes from March 01, 2006 OPAG meeting performed via e-mail to OPAG members

3. Old Business/ Standing Agenda Items

3.1. Retention pay (ORSP)/Loan Repayment

- 3.1.1. Nothing new to report. Optometrists still cannot receive loan repayment and ORSP concurrently.
- 3.1.2. For FY 2006, there were 19 LRP extensions and 2 new awards

3.2. Medical Benefits - nothing new to report. Tricare information is available on-line at www.tricare.osd.mil. TRICARE has many different e-newsletters you can subscribe to by visiting the website. The Fact Sheets subscription is useful to keep up with benefits changes.

3.3. Transformation

- 3.3.1. Transformation appears to be moving forward. CDR Nichols reported that the transformation workgroups were small and closed.
- 3.3.2. See section 4.5 of these minutes for additional transformation information.

3.4. Pay – Nothing new to report.

3.5. Uniform Policies – Nothing new to report.

3.6. Retirement – tentative retirements

- 3.6.1 CAPT Hatch, mid-2006
- 3.6.2 CAPT John Garber, August 2006

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3.6.3 CAPT James Hughes, August 2006

3.6.4 There have been instances of officers submitting PHS Forms 1373 (Separation of CO) through their supervisory channels to OCCO for processing. This can work well if the 30 day rule is not an issue. However, it causes delays in the effective date of separation if the 1373 arrives at OCCO without giving 30 days notice to OCCO (from last day at duty station).

Officers should fax a copy directly to OCCO, Assignments Division, Fax number 240 453 6030 and simultaneously forward a copy through their supervisory channels/Fiscal/Administrative Officer.

Prior to the electronic forms, we used to use the carbon copy 1373 where one of the 2 carbon copies went thru supervisory channels and the original copy went directly to OCCO (DCP).

Officers have always been encouraged to fax a copy directly to OCCO immediately after filling out Part A in order to meet the 30 day rule. This has not changed.

3.7 OPAG Position Papers – Nothing new to report

3.8 Title 38 – Civil Service Reclassification – Pay Issues

3.8.1 Nothing new to report.

4 New Business and Liaison Reports

4.1 OPAG Membership

4.1.1 The terms of the current OPAG members expire this year.

4.1.2 OPAG membership is currently a two year term.

4.1.3 Each agency within PHS employing at least one optometrist will have one representative for every 20 optometrists. Each agency will determine their representative(s).

4.1.4 CAPT Linda Morris Brown advised the promotion board that PAG membership to be equivalent to PAC membership for promotion purposes.

4.1.5 OPAG members discussed starting a staggered term system – OPAG members will consult the HSO PAC and OPAG Bylaws for guidance.

4.1.6 OPAG is encouraging civil service optometrists to nominate a representative.

4.1.7 Those optometrists interested in joining OPAG should contact their Area Chief.

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4.2 OFRD Report – CDR Larry Zubel

- 4.2.1 CDR Zubel presented a PowerPoint presentation on OFRD at the Biennial PHS Optometry Meeting in Fullerton. Those officers wanting a copy of the presentation should contact CDR Zubel.
- 4.2.1 Hurricane Katrina deployments are still ongoing.
- 4.2.2 Clinical optometrist is now a recognized OFRD deployment role. Those officers wishing to deploy as Clinical Optometrists should select that role on the OFRD questionnaire on the OFRD website. Officers who do not select a deployment role or tier level will be assigned a tier and role by OFRD.

4.3 Eye Care Coordination Committee Report – CAPT Richard Hatch – nothing to report

4.4 I.H.S. Optometry Clinical Consultant Report

- 4.4.1 CAPT Terry Schleisman announced his resignation as the I.H.S. Optometry Clinical Consultant citing increasing clinical responsibilities.
- 4.4.2 CDR Carmen Palma and CDR Michael Candrea were appointed as interim Vice Clinical Consultants.
- 4.4.3 A meeting with the Optometry Area Chiefs was held at the PHS Optometry Biennial Meeting. A new I.H.S. Optometry Clinical Consultant will be announced in the near future.

4.5 COA Liaison Report – CDR Dawn Clary

- 4.5.1 CAPT Jerry Farrell (retired) from COA spoke at the PHS Optometry Biennial Meeting in Fullerton, CA regarding Corps issues and transformation
 - 4.5.1.1 The Corps has received authorization for 6600 members.
 - 4.5.1.2 Transformation is moving forward. Changes officers can expect are increased mobility and billet revisions.
 - 4.5.1.3 CAPT Farrell stressed that the needs of the Corp will come first in determining assignments and mobility.

4.6 HSO-PAC Liaison Report – CDR Nancy Nichols – meeting April 07, 2006

- 4.6.1 OCCO
 - 4.6.1.1 117 HSO applicants so far for the year
 - 4.6.1.2 OCCO undergoing personnel changes – hoping to fill positions

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- 4.6.1.3** BOTC manual will be put online so participants can download before attending
- 4.6.1.4** Promotion announcements expected *after* COA, around July 1
- 4.6.1.5** Reminder to all officers up for promotion that readiness gets checked multiple times, including after the promotion board has reviewed the OPF. So for example, if an officer was recommended by the promotion board for promotion, and for some reason the officer fell off the readiness list any time during that period, that name would be removed from the promotion list (regardless of the fact that the officer was already approved for promotion). And don't count on reminders from OFRD on your readiness status.
- 4.6.1.6** Remember to send in your 5 year PE on time and Medical History every year – send to MAB
- 4.6.2** CPO Report
 - 4.6.2.1** 5 transformation groups are finished (170 pages of details currently being circulated with Agency heads & Secretary Levitt will meet with the Agency heads at some points)
 - 4.6.2.2** CPOs not included as a formal group in the transformation groups
 - 4.6.2.3** DHHS is transforming & there is the issue of CO carving out a niche separate from civil servants (Dr. Vanderwagon heading this). OFRD will select “mission critical officers” that will be Tier 1 for readiness
 - 4.6.2.4** 8% of all officers have never logged on or entered info for readiness, so there is talk of doing some sort of retention standards.
 - 4.6.2.5** Currently the call to active duty for officers is 9-12 months, and the goal is 8-12 weeks
 - 4.6.2.6** CPOs are scheduled to meet with the ASH on 4/26/06 to see if he signed the 3 and freeze for this year
 - 4.6.2.7** They want to develop a system on changing the CPO election system (like a CPO select to help with the transition of one CPO replacing another)
 - 4.6.2.8** CPO Board will have a retreat the end of July
 - 4.6.2.9** CAPT Brown is encouraging the PAG chairs to forward their award applicants for the Amsus awards (“can't win if you don't play”). The deadline for the competitive awards is 6/30/06. The

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HSO Awards Subcommittee will be assisting with the Amsus award nominations.

4.6.2.10 The search is on for a new CPO – the deadline has been extended to solicit additional applications. CAPT Brown said anyone could call her if they wish to discuss this further. The applicants must be regular corp., a CAPT, and they need their agency support and funding (!)

4.6.3 MISC

4.6.3.1 Associate recruiter policy signed by the ASH. Starting “now” in terms of submitting reports to maintain your qualification as a recruiter

4.6.3.2 Much discussion on the HSO promotion benchmarks. CAPT Brown said officers should look at them as a model for the officer; as a roadmap for your career.

4.6.3.3 An officer should never be in a billet below their grade (promotion suicide)

4.6.3.4 Composition of the promotion boards= try to get different agencies/races/field/ disciplines/gender. The HSO promotion board is composed of HSO officers. It is essential that you share specifically what you do for those outside of your discipline.

4.6.4 Next HSO PAC Meeting: June 02 2006

4.7 JOAG Liaison Report – LCDR Greg Flaitz – no report received

4.8 AFOS Liaison Report – CAPT Greg Ketcher

4.8.1 AFOS would like a PHS representative to attend the open panel for billing and coding issues at the next FSO meeting. CDR Whiteplume volunteered to participate.

4.8.2 All providers need to sign up for the Medicare National Provider Identification Number. It will be required for Medicare billing purposes in the future. You can sign up on line at: <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov> You may also enter your current Medicare provider number and UPIN. Please contact your billing staff or CAPT Ketcher if you need assistance.

4.8.3 CAPT Brown reported that he is on the design workgroup for the AFOS PHS Commemorative Coin. The coin will be given to newly and previously promoted 0-6 officers. The coin will feature the PHS logo on one side. CAPT Brown encourages officers with design ideas to contact him.

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4.8.4 FSO meeting will be held October 30 to November 3, 2006 at the Hilton Springfield in Virginia (703-971-8900).

4.9 AMSUS Liaison Report – CAPT Clifford Brown – no report received

4.10 PHS HSO PAC Recruitment and Placement Sub-Committee Liaison– CDR David Bellware – no report received

4.11 FDA Optometry Report – CDR Kimberly Lewandowski-Walker – nothing to report

4.12 CDC Optometry Report – Dr. Michael Duenas

4.12.1 Dr. Duenas reported a correction from the previous OPAG minutes regarding the CDC Vision Modules. The prior OPAG minutes stated that each vision module costs approximately \$10,000/state and that the American Optometric Association and the American Academy of Optometry worked in concert to provide funding for the modules. It was actually the American Optometric Association and the American Academy of **Ophthalmology** that provided funding for the modules.

5. Career Development/Promotions/Awards

5.1 Billets – nothing to report

5.2 Promotions

5.2.1 Officers eligible for competitive permanent promotion in PY2006 will not be promoted unless the Medical Affairs Branch has on file a current "Report of Medical History" (including a signed "Disclosure Statement"), within 1 year prior to the expected permanent promotion effective date AND a current physical examination (within the last 5 years). Officers, who are NOT within medical compliance at the time these files are checked, will be DENIED permanent promotion for the 2006 Promotion year cycle. See the following website if you need forms:
<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/infomgt/forms/eforms/dd2807-1.pdf>

5.2.2 Officers eligible for competitive temporary grade promotions in PY2006 will not be promoted unless basic readiness is achieved and maintained. Log into the OFRD website to check your basic readiness status and the expiration date of your immunizations and fitness test. **Readiness is checked by OCCO several times, including after the promotion board meets. Officers not meeting basic readiness will not be promoted.**

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5.3 Awards

5.3.1 OPAG announced the following awards at the PHS Optometry Biennial Meeting:

5.3.1.1 The Lester Caplan Award recognizes a PHS tribal direct hire or PHS civil service optometrist who has demonstrated exemplary work as evidenced by a specific accomplishment(s) toward the mission of the PHS:

5.3.1.1.1 This year's Lester Caplan award winner: Dr. William Pierre, Crandon, Wisconsin

5.3.1.2 The Edward Hamilton Award is presented to a career USPHS Optometry Commissioned Officer who is recognized by his/her peers for outstanding work as evidenced by a specific accomplishment(s) toward the mission of the PHS.

5.3.1.2.1 This year's Edward Hamilton award winner : CAPT John Garber, Ada, Oklahoma

5.3.1.3 Nominations for next years Lester Caplan and Edward Hamilton awards are being accepted. Contact any OPAG member for details.

5.3.2 For Commissioned Officers, the order of precedence for the wearing of ribbons can be found at <http://coa.spsp.net/webpage/uniforms/ribbons.html>

5.4 Readiness/OFRD

5.4.1 Any officers not meeting readiness who require assistance should contact CDR Zubel.

5.4.2 See section 4.2 of these minutes for additional OFRD information.

5.5 Assimilation

5.5.1 Applications for Assimilation year 2007 are available on the CCMIS website under official forms (PHS form 7034). Examples of officer statements can be obtained by contacting your agency liaison or by request to the assimilation coordinator, Camille.hawkins@hhs.gov.

5.6 Pay – Nothing to report

5.7 Positions

5.7.1 The most recent Recruitment Announcement can be found on the IHS Optometry Website at www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Optometry/Optjobs.cfm.

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5.8 In Memoriam

5.8.1 In memory of Alice Garber, late wife of CAPT John Garber, a memorial lecture has been dedicated at the Biennial PHS Optometry Meeting.

6 Communications

6.1 CAPT Ketcher reported that the OPAG has a web page on the HSO PAC website. Contact CAPT Ketcher if you wish to put information on the OPAG web page, such as awards, meeting minutes, etc.

7 Meetings and Recruitment Activities

7.1 AOA Convention - Next AOA – June 21-25, 2006 – Las Vegas, Nevada.
Information is available at www.aoa.org

7.2 AMSUS – November 05-10, 2006 – San Antonio, TX.

7.3 AAO Annual Meeting –. December 7-10, 2006 at the Colorado Convention Center, Denver, Colorado. Information can be found at www.aaopt.org

7.4 BOTC – Upcoming events
July 29th – August 2nd ** Minneapolis, MN Contact: LCDR Ron Keats

7.7 AFOS – next meeting is October 30-November 03, 2006 at the Hilton in Alexandria, Virginia.

7.8 COA –2007 USPHS Conference will be held in Cincinnati, Ohio during the first week of June.

8 Action Items

8.1 Submit OPAG award winners for the Commissioned Officers Bulletin by CDR Palma and to the HSO Webpage by CAPT Ketcher

8.2 Call for nominations for next year's OPAG awards will be submitted to the Commissioned Officers Bulletin by CDR Palma and to the HSO Webpage by CAPT Ketcher

8.3 Call for nominations for OPAG membership will be announced by the agency chief optometrists

8.4 Establish a fund within the Commissioned Officer's Foundation for OPAG funds - CDR Lewandowski-Walker

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9 OPAG Meetings

9.1 Next meeting scheduled for July 05, 2006 from 11:00am CST. OPAG members should use the same conference call number and password.

9.2 OPAG liaisons should submit their activity reports to CAPT Ketcher by close of business June 26, 2006 so they can be shared with the OPAG members.

9.3 Meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm

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

Distribution: HSO CPO, HSO PAC, PHS Optometrists