## Ophthalmology Grand Rounds

Course Director: Bruce E. Prum, Jr., MD

### Mid-Year Forum and Advocacy Day

Presented by: Samuel D. Levant, MD 6/10/2025



Provided by the School of Medicine and School of Nursing

### Accreditation



In support of improving patient care, UVA Health Continuing Education is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.

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### **Presentation Information**

#### Global Objectives for all Regularly Scheduled Series

At the conclusion of this course, participants should be able to:

- Incorporate new guidelines, techniques, and recent research into clinical practice based on the concepts shared in this series.
- Discuss current clinical cases in the context of evidence-based medicine to identify appropriate screenings and treatments for patients.
- Improve healthcare outcomes by regularly and frequently engaging the healthcare team in up-to-date and evidence-based education.
- Promote the maintenance, improvement, and broadening of knowledge and skills throughout your professional life through attendance at this regularly scheduled series.
- Incorporate systems-based and practice-based processes to improve patient safety and quality in healthcare.
- Communicate effectively with clinical colleagues by incorporating interprofessional discussion techniques and patient-centered strategies, as appropriate.
- Analyze published outcome results and apply to current cases to inform the appropriate treatment of patients and practice of medicine.

#### Off-Label Disclosure

This course may include presentations on drugs of devices, or use of drugs or devices that have not been approved by the FDA, or have been approved by the FDA for specific uses only. The FDA has stated that it is the responsibility of the physician to determine the FDA clearance status of each drug or device he or she wishes to use in clinical practice.

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The following relationships have been reported for this activity:

Name	Role	Relationship	Company/ies
Samuel Levant, MD	Speaker	na	na

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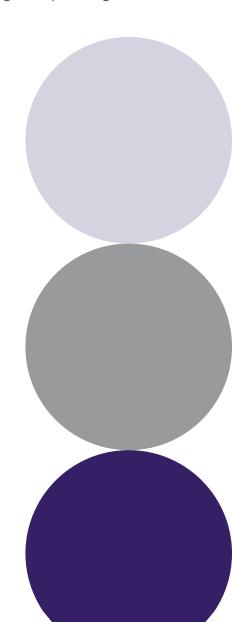




# Mid-Year Forum and Advocacy Day April 2-5, 2025 Washington, D.C.

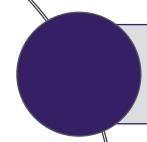
Samuel Levant, PGY-3 University of Virginia Virginia Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons (VSEPS)

Presented 6/10/2025

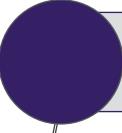




### Mid-Year Forum



The American Academy of Ophthalmology's Mid-Year Forum is an annual meeting in Washington, D.C.



The Mid-Year Forum encompasses "Politics, Policy, and Practice Management"



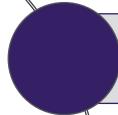
#### **Key objectives:**

- •Discuss and debate proposed policies and programs addressing critical issues facing the profession and patient care
- Identify new challenges and opportunities that require the Academy's attention.
- Acquire information and input from state, subspecialty, and specialized interest societies.
- Educate participants about Academy activities and critical issues to enhance their roles as effective leaders and representatives.





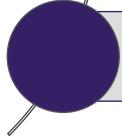
## Congressional Advocacy Day



Advocacy Day is a core component of the Mid-Year Forum, facilitating direct engagement with federal policymakers.



**Purpose**: have ophthalmologists meet with legislators to advocate for the issues that affect our profession & patients.



#### Process:

- •AAO schedules targeted legislative visits with U.S. Representatives, Senators, and their staff (typically from your state or district)
- •Participants receive briefings on priority issues (e.g., Medicare payment, veterans' care, research funding, scope creep) and advocacy techniques.
- •Ophthalmologists meet with and educate lawmakers to try to influence legislation affecting ophthalmology and eye care





**What:** Sponsored program for residents and fellows to participate in Advocacy Day and Mid-Year Forum with some specialty programing targeted towards networking, leadership development, and engagement.

**Why:** To engage residents & fellows in advocacy and connect them with their state ophthalmology societies and the AAO. Goal of demonstrating the importance of advocating for our profession and patients as well as creating a career-long commitment to the Academy.

**Who:** Trainees sponsored by ophthalmic state societies, subspecialty societies, and training programs. Registration fee waived by AAO for ambassadors. 224 residents and fellows attended as 2025 Advocacy Ambassadors and 5 medical students participated as "guests."

When/Where: In conjunction with annual Mid-Year Forum in April.



# Mid-Year Forum 2025: Timeline of Policy & Advocacy Events



Evening: Congressional Advocacy Day (CAD) Dinner Briefing; Advocacy Ambassador Program Briefing.

# Thursday, April 3:

Daytime: Congressional Advocacy Day – Visits on Capitol Hill.

Afternoon: Mid-Year Forum Opening Session – "New Administration and New Congress."

Evening: Surgical Scope Fund Reception.

# Friday, April 4:

Morning: Policy Hearings; Advocacy Ambassador L.E.A.P. Forward Session.

Lunch/Afternoon: Closing Session on Surgical Coaching; Council Opening Session & Regional Meetings.

Evening: OPHTHPAC Reception.

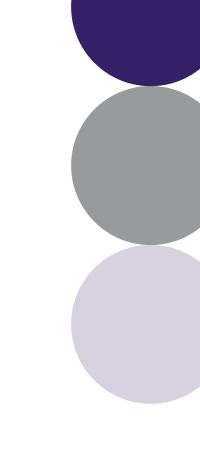
# Saturday, April 5:

Council Meetings, Elections, & Hearing on Council Advisory Recommendations (CARs).



# Advocacy Ambassador Events: Wed. April 2

- Congressional Advocacy Day Dinner Briefing
- Reception/Briefing for Advocacy Ambassadors





# Wednesday April 2 (PM): Congressional Advocacy Dinner Briefing





- Prep for discussing Academy priority issues during Congressional visits
- Led by Academy OPHTHPAC Committee
   Chair: Sohail Hasan, MD, PhD
- Recognition: Robert A. Copeland Jr., MD Advocacy Education Fund recipient



# Wednesday April 2: Advocacy Ambassador Briefing / Reception

 Meet & mingle with members of the Academy's Young Ophthalmologist (YO) Committee & other leaders:

President: Michael X. Repka, MD, MBA

o CEO: Stephen McLeod, MD

EyeWiki Editor-in Chief: Cat Burkat, MD

 Recognized the 2024 EyeWiki Residents & Fellows Contest Winners (4 residents won allexpense paid trip to Mid-Year Forum)

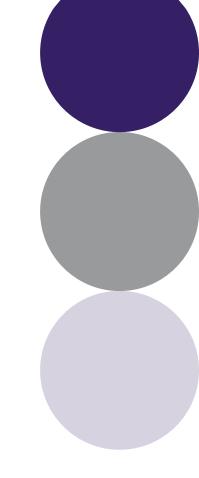




# Advocacy Ambassador Events: Thurs. April 3

- Congressional Advocacy Day Visits on the Hill
- Mid-Year Forum Opening Session
- Mid-Year Forum Reception & Awards Banquet
- Surgical Scope Fund Reception





## Congressional Advocacy Day



 Advocacy Ambassadors join seasoned physician advocates to discuss Academy priority issues with Members of Congress and their health care staff

Minnesota contingent meets with U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar



## Congressional Advocacy Day Issues

- Medicare Physician Payment Stability & Fairness
- 2. Ensuring High Quality Eye Care for American Veterans
- 3. Federal Funding for Vision Research
- 4. Prior Authorization Reform Improving Patient Access & Reducing Physician Burdens
- 5. Dept of Defense Peer-Reviewed Vision Research Program
- 6. Increasing Access to Pediatric Eye Care





California contingent meets with U.S. Representative Sam Liccardo

# 1. Medicare Physician Payment – Stability & Fairness

## The challenge: unsustainable reimbursement

- Medicare physician payments: ~26% decline vs. practice cost inflation (MEI) since 2001. Hospital payments have kept pace.
- Cataract surgery (66984) allowance: now ~\$529 vs. inflation-adjusted ~\$4,727 (mid-1980s).
- Systemic issues: Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) budget neutrality, Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act's (MACRA) inadequate updates (0% for 2020-2025).

- Immediate relief: urging passage of H.R. 879 (Medicare Patient Access and Practice Stabilization Act of 2025) to prevent 2.83% Medicare physician payment cut in 2025 & provide an inflationary update.
- Long-term solutions: annual inflation-based MPFS updates; modifications to budget neutrality rules; overhaul of the Quality Payment Program.
- Ongoing engagement with CMS & AMA Relative Value Scale Update Committee for accurate service valuation.



## 2. Ensuring High Quality Eye Care for American Veterans



## The challenge: protecting surgical standards within the VA system

 Optometric efforts seek to expand optometric scope of practice within the VA system to include ophthalmic surgical procedures (e.g. lasers), which could allow optometrists to perform laser surgery in states where they do not have laser privileges.

- Patient safety first: surgical procedures must be performed exclusively by ophthalmologists (MDs/DOs) with comprehensive medical and surgical residency training.
- Federal preemption risk: allowing optometrists to perform surgery in federal VA facilities could preempt stricter state licensing laws, permitting practice beyond state-authorized scope if licensed for surgery in any state. This undermines state-level patient protections nationwide.
- The "Surgery by Surgeons" principle is actively defended via governmental affairs and the Surgical Scope Fund.



## 3. Federal Funding for Vision Research

## The critical role of the National Eye Institute (NEI):

 Primary federal agency for vision research (basic science to clinical trials), largely conducted at academic institutions.

### Why sustained funding matters:

- Drives innovation for new diagnostics, treatments, and cures.
- Essential for training future vision researchers.
- Reduces public health burden of vision loss.

## Historical context & AAO's advocacy:

- AAO consistently advocates for robust, predictable annual NEI appropriations.
- During the Trump
   Administration, some initial budget proposals suggested broad cuts to the NIH
- The Academy's advocacy focuses on demonstrating research value to all administrations and Congress.



# 4. Prior Authorization Reform – Improving Patient Access & Reducing Physician Burdens

#### The challenge: barriers to timely care

 Prior authorization by payers creates significant administrative burdens and can cause critical delays in medically necessary patient care, impacting outcomes.

- Championing federal legislation, such as the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act (previously H.R. 5378/S. 3018 in 118th Congress), to:
  - Establish an electronic PA (ePA) process.
  - Increase transparency (payer reporting on PA rates).
  - Ensure reviews by qualified medical personnel.
  - Reduce PAs for routine services & via "goldcarding."
- Advocating for CMS to strengthen PA rules for Medicare Advantage plans.



# 5. Dept of Defense Peer-Reviewed Vision Research Program

#### **Unique focus of the DoD VRP:**

Part of Congressionally
 Directed Medical Research
 Programs (CDMRP), the VRP
 funds research on military eye
 trauma, TBI-related visual
 dysfunction, and vision issues
 affecting service
 members/veterans.

#### **Importance and impact:**

- Supports innovative, highimpact research, often addressing gaps not covered by NEI.
- Critical for treatments for combat-related eye injuries and TBI-associated vision problems.
- Findings often have valuable translational applications for civilian ophthalmology.

- Advocating for robust annual appropriations for the DoD VRP.
- Highlighting VRP's unique contributions to military health and the vision research enterprise.



# 6. Increasing Access to Pediatric Eye Care

## The challenge: ensuring early and comprehensive care for children

- Many children, especially in underserved areas, lack timely access to vital eye care.
- Insufficient number of new pediatric ophthalmologists to meet population needs.
- Pediatric ophthalmology fellowship positions often go unmatched annually.
- Extended training and reimbursement levels may disincentivize trainees from this critical subspecialty.

- Supporting policies for expanded and standardized early vision screening.
- Advocating for improved referral pathways and measures to address workforce challenges.
- Working for comprehensive insurance coverage for all medically necessary pediatric eye care.



## Our Representatives



Rep. Morgan Griffith



Rep. Suhas Subramanyam



Rep. John McGuire



Sen. Mark Warner



Sen. Tim Kaine





## The Year-Round Advocacy Process

**OPHTHPAC:** AAO's non-partisan political action committee, supporting federal candidates who understand ophthalmology's issues.

**Surgical Scope Fund:** Supports "Surgery by Surgeons" advocacy efforts at the state level and, through the Academy's "Protecting America's Eyesight" campaign, upholds the highest standards of surgical eye care nationwide.

State Society Collaboration (e.g. VSEPS): Essential for grassroots efforts and addressing local legislative/regulatory issues.



# Mid-Year Forum Opening Session (Thursday Evening)

New Administration & New Congress:
Opportunities and Challenges Facing
Ophthalmology, Medicine & our Patients

### Featuring:

- Co-Moderators:

John McAllister, MD Academy Secretary for Federal Affairs Zelia Correa, MD, PhD Member, OPHTHPAC Committee

- U.S. Representative John Joyce, MD (R-PA)







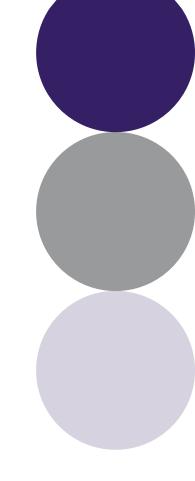
- Fund supports Surgery by Surgeons advocacy efforts at the state level
- Supports Academy's Protecting America's Eyesight campaign to fight for highest standards of surgical eye care simultaneously in the VA and statehouses nationwide
- Advocacy Ambassadors invited at reduced contribution rate of \$75 (regular contribution rate \$550)



# Advocacy Ambassador Events: Fri. April 4

- L.E.A.P. Forward for Ambassadors
- Mid-Year Forum Luncheon Session: Surgical Coaching
- Capitol Hill Wrap Up Session for Ambassadors
- Council Regional Meetings
- OPHTHPAC Reception





### L.E.A.P. Forward

- Leadership (Keynote: Andrea Tooley, MD)
- Engagement (Keynote: Ore-Ofe Adesina, MD, PhD)
- Advocacy (Keynote: Michael Puente Jr., MD)
- Practice Management (Keynote: Ruth Williams, MD)





### L.E.A.P. Forward



**Focus:** A 3.5-hour intensive session for 220+ Advocacy Ambassadors (residents/fellows) and medical students.

**Themes:** Leadership, Engagement, Advocacy, and Practice Management (L.E.A.P.).

**Format:** Keynotes by Drs. Andrea Tooley, Ore-Ofe Adesina, Michael Puente Jr., Ruth Williams; panel discussions; networking with ~25 AAO/society leaders; conversation with AAO CEO Dr. Stephen McLeod.

**Key Messages:** "Show up... speak up... follow up"; "Collaboration is key"; "Young voices are powerful"; "The future is physician-led."

**Goal:** Inspire early career engagement in advocacy, society involvement, and understanding of critical issues, with a strong emphasis on continued state-level activity.



## Luncheon Session - Surgical Coaching

**Session Focus:** discuss AAO & ABO post-graduate surgical coaching pilot, aimed at lifelong skill development and surgeon confidence.

**Rationale:** Inspired by Dr. Atul Gawande's "The Coach in the Operating Room." Hypothesizes that like elite athletes, surgeons can benefit from coaching to sustain peak performance and learn new skills. Initial surveys showed 98% of ophthalmologists interested in improving surgical skills.

#### Pilot Program Details (Drs. Ron Pelton & Andrea Tooley):

- Surgeon mentees (Operating Room Overachievers OROs) matched with expert coaches.
- Format: Secure surgical video sharing, timestamped feedback, structured mentorship addressing pre-op preparation, surgical technique, decision-making, closure, and ergonomics.

#### Addressing "Second Victim Syndrome" (Dr. A. Luisa Di Lorenzo):

- Second Victim Syndrome (SVS): emotional distress experienced by clinicians after a traumatic patient care event or medical error. Affects nearly 50% of healthcare workers.
- Stages include chaos, intrusive reflections, restoring integrity, scrutiny ("the inquisition"), obtaining emotional first aid, and moving on (thriving, lingering distress, or leaving practice).
- Emphasized need for peer support programs and a "just culture" that balances accountability with understanding and compassion.

**High-Priority Objectives:** Consider expanding the pilot, developing resources for coaches/mentees, integrating wellness/SVS awareness, and exploring maintenance of certification (MOC) Part IV credit recognition.





## Capitol Hill Wrap Up Session for Ambassadors

- Ambassadors share experiences and ask questions regarding their Hill visits
- Presentations on applying advocacy experience at the state level and engaging with state ophthalmology societies (Drs. Casey Smith, Curt Heisel).
- Overview of the Surgical Scope Fund (Dr. K. David Epley) and OPHTHPAC, and how they support federal/state advocacy.
- Discussion of actionable steps to protect quality eye care (Mark Lukaszewski, AAO Director of Congressional Affairs).
- Pledge to became engaged state ophthalmology society members!





### Other MYF Discussions

(Not Attended by Ambassadors)

#### **Ophthalmic Innovation & Industry:**

- Challenges: reduced risk tolerance, investment gaps, reimbursement hurdles, industry consolidation are slowing innovation.
- Potential Solutions: AAO leveraging clinical expertise, FDA/payer navigation, IRIS® Registry, Eyecelerator meetings. Industry collaboration on clinical endpoints and adaptive trials. FDA initiatives (Fast Track, RMAT) to accelerate approvals. Addressing AI reimbursement.

#### **Medicare Fraud & False Claims Act:**

- Focus: understanding FCA, Anti-Kickback Statute (AKS) to protect practices.
- **Take-Aways:** implement strong compliance systems (whistleblower actions increasing). Avoid reliance on vendor advice for compliance. Meticulous documentation is crucial. Co-management must prioritize patient welfare.

#### **Digital Presence (Reputation & Marketing):**

- **Reputation:** manage "digital footprint" (website, reviews, social media). 77% of patients start with Google search. Use Google Business Profiles. Adhere to FTC (truthful advertising, no fake/suppressed reviews) and AMA ethics (privacy, no unsubstantiated claims).
- Marketing: use analytics (CRMs, website data) to track patient journeys and ROI. Understand cost-per-lead. Al is improving analytics.



## Council Regional Meetings

#### 9 Regional Meetings – Roundtable discussion on:

- How can state and subspecialty society members within your region enhance engagement and collaboration?
- What makes your region unique and how do you promote/manage that when considering question #1?

**Outcome**: Designed to generate actionable ideas for strengthening inter-society cooperation and addressing regional challenges (e.g. co-hosting events, joint initiatives, sharing best practices, addressing medication access, engaging YOs).





## **OPHTHPAC** Reception

- OPHTHPAC is a non-partisan, proophthalmology political action committee (PAC) representing ophthalmology & its members on Capitol Hill
- Venue: International Spy Museum

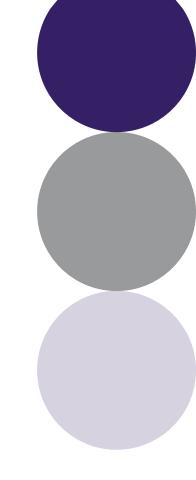




# Advocacy Ambassador Events: Sat. April 5

- Council State Section Meeting
- Council Subspecialty Section Meeting
- Council Elections
- Council Advisory Recommendation (CAR) Hearing
- Council Luncheon





## **Spring Council Meeting**

- Impact of NIH Directive
- State & Federal Affairs Updates
- Successful Outcomes: State Society
   Scope Battles in New Hampshire & the District of Columbia





# **Council Advisory Recommendation (CAR) Hearing**

**Purpose:** A key component of the Spring Council Meeting, the CAR Hearing serves to obtain comments and suggestions on draft Council Advisory Recommendations from councilors and members-at-large, aiming to identify consensus opinions on solutions. It is a primary mechanism for the Council to provide input to the AAO Board of Trustees.

Process & Format (2025 Chairs: Joseph M. Coney, MD & Laura B. Enyedi, MD ):

- Introduction: Councilors who submitted a CAR provide a brief (2-minute) description of the issue.
- Academy Response: An AAO Board of Trustees member or other leader gives a brief (2-minute) overview of how the Academy is currently addressing the issue or provides relevant background.
- **Discussion:** Councilors are given the first opportunity to discuss each CAR (comments ~2 minutes each), with the hearing chair focusing discussion on developing consensus opinions and solutions. Other Academy members may be invited to speak.

#### Council Vote & Outcome:

- Councilors vote on whether the Academy's response sufficiently addressed the issues in the CAR.
- The priority of the CAR is also determined by Council vote.

#### Significance in 2025:

 Nine CARs were considered, covering a wide range of topics including new member dues, CME accreditation, disaster eye care preparedness, enhancing councilor communication, regulating fingernails in basketball, measuring the Advocacy Ambassador Program's effectiveness, in-office care impediments, an Academy-State membership pilot, and reimbursement reform



#### **Conclusion: A Call for Continued Engagement**

Ophthalmology faces complex challenges: reimbursement, access, quality, and innovation.



Sustained, collective advocacy is essential. The AAO Mid-Year Forum is a key platform.



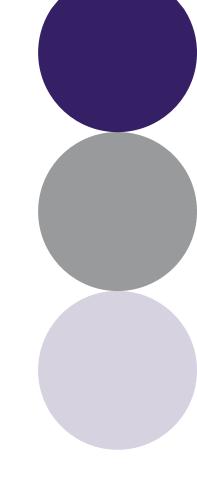
Continued engagement through AAO, VSEPS, and other bodies is crucial to protect sight and empower lives.



### Announcements & Deadlines

- Engage with Your State Ophthalmology Society!
- Get Most Out of Your AAO Membership!
- Ambassador Social Media Challenge (Photo Contest)
- 2025 YO ONE Surgical Video Contest
- Save Date for Mid-Year Forum 2026 (April 15-18)!





### YO / ONE Network Video Contest

- Academy YO members (residents, fellows, physicians in their first five years of practice)
- Submit a one-minute surgical video
- Opens: June 1 Deadline: September 1
- 4 Winning categories with prizes and a chance to present at the 2025 YO Program in Orlando!





# Virginia Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons





President: John McAllister, MD

Home - Virginia Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons



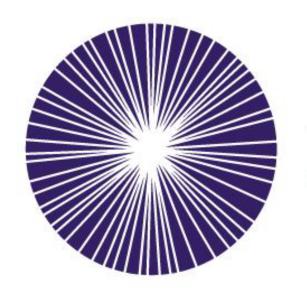
## Save the Date

## Mid-Year Forum 2026 April 15-18 Washington, D.C.

- The Academy will begin reaching out to state
   & subspecialty societies re. their interest in sponsoring Advocacy Ambassadors in early
   Dec. 2025
- Online registration will be announced in mid-January 2025







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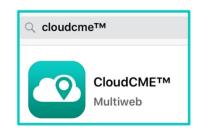
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