

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

Teleconference Report – 11:05am to 12:30pm, Wednesday February 02, 2005– Page 1 of 7

1. Attendees:

1.1. OPAG Members

- 1.1.1. CAPT Greg Ketcher (Chair)
- 1.1.2. CAPT Frank Behan
- 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. (Absent): LCDR Barbara Massey

1.2. Guests

- 1.2.1. CAPT Richard Hatch (Chief Clinical Consultant for Optometry)
- 1.2.2. CAPT Brian Hudson (Discipline Liaison - HSO PAC Recruitment Subcommittee)
- 1.2.3. LCDR David Bellware (Discipline Liaison - HSO PAC Recruitment Subcommittee)

2. Meeting called to order at 11:05am

- 2.1.1. Approval of minutes from January 05, 2005 OPAG meeting performed via e-mail to OPAG members

3. Old Business

3.1. Retention pay (ORSP)

- 3.1.1. 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.

3.2. Billets

- 3.2.1. CDR Palma investigated the issue regarding updating the optometry billets. CDR Palma was informed that OCCO is not restructuring billets at the present time due to the transformation of the Corps and the possibility of a PHS-wide billet restructuring program.

- 3.3. **OPAG Report** regarding our activities was given to CDR Nichols for presentation to the HSO PAC at their February 04, 2005 meeting. The February 2005 HSO-PAC OPAG Report is posted on the IHS Optometry Web Board.

3.4. Civil Service Reclassification – Title 38 – I.H.S. Special Pay Schedule

- 3.4.1. CAPT Hatch has been working on this issue
- 3.4.2. Dr. Tracy Crane will be asked to be the lead for civil service optometry issues.
- 3.4.3. The position descriptions for civil service optometrists are in the process of being updated from GS-11 to GS-12.
- 3.4.4. The I.H.S. optometry special pay scale for civil service optometrists has been submitted to I.H.S. headquarters. This means that civil service optometrists would be paid on special pay scale compared to non-O.D. civil servants.

- 3.5 CAPT Behan announced that he has made tentative plans to retire on June 01, 2005.

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4. New Business

4.1. AFOS “O.D. of the Year” for 2005 is CAPT Richard Hatch!

4.2 Communications

- 3.2.1 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.

4.3 Staffing/Recruitment/Retention

- 4.3.1 CAPT Brian Hudson and LCDR David Bellware were appointed to the HSO PAC Recruitment Subcommittee for two-year terms as Discipline Liaisons. The purpose of this subcommittee is to help applicants to the Commissioned Corps who have been accepted pending being matched with a position.
- 4.3.2 CAPT Hudson was assigned 7 HSOs to help place in positions. None were optometrists. LCDR Bellware was assigned 3 O.D.s, but the information regarding the applicants was over a year old.
- 4.3.3 The suggestion was made by CDR Palma to survey PHS optometrists not working at I.H.S. regarding possible non-I.H.S. positions that optometrists could fill and how those optometrists found those positions, their additional qualifications, etc. The purpose of this survey is to assist PHS optometrists wishing to move to different agencies and obtain non-clinical positions. LCDR Bellware was appointed PHS Optometry Recruitment Liaison by OPAG. LCDR Bellware stated that he would be willing to work on keeping a running list of optometrists looking for positions and available I.H.S. optometry positions and non-I.H.S positions within the PHS that optometrists might be qualified to fill (i.e. FDA, CDC, etc).
- 4.3.4 Current position openings in the Federal Government can be obtained at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov> and via the OCCO website under the Commissioned Corps Job Vacancy database link.
- USPHS website Other Federal Jobs page
http://www.usphs.gov/html/other_federal_jobs.html
- CCMIS web site mailing list for Commissioned Corps Vacancies
http://dcp.psc.gov/v_maillist.asp

4.4 Career Development/Promotions/Awards

4.4.1 Optometry Mentoring

- 4.4.1.1 Discussion regarding matching junior optometry officers with senior optometry officers through a mentoring program. Optometrists wishing to serve as mentors or wanting a mentor should contact CDR Nichols.
- 4.4.2 **Uniform Policies** – nothing new to report

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4.4.3 Medical Benefits

4.4.3.1 CDR Palma reported that officers in the Anchorage area can continue to receive care at the Alaska Native Medical Center, rather than being limited to receiving their care at the Air Force base.

4.4.3.2 Some officers and their dependents have been receiving bills for medical care received at I.H.S. facilities. This is apparently due to the inability of I.H.S. to bill Tricare. No resolution to this issue as of yet. Officers and dependents should check with their Service Unit prior to receiving care to avoid unexpected medical bills for care received at I.H.S. facilities.

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

4.4.4 CCRF/ORFD

4.4.4.1 CAPT Ketcher will solicit nominations for an ORFD liaison for optometry. Interested officers should contact CAPT Ketcher. Final selection will be made by the OPAG. In order to be eligible for this position, you must have achieved Basic Readiness. Since some of the OPAG members are with other agencies and don't know all the IHS personnel, OPAG has asked for a brief statement on why you want to do this and what you have to offer.

4.4.5 Promotions

4.4.5.1 A draft policy regarding the 6th promotion precept involving promotion credit for officers serving in ISO HAR or hard-to-fill locations has been developed. The policy is still in the draft stage and has not yet been approved. CDR Nichols will inquire with the HSO-PAC to determine their input on this issue.

4.4.6 Transformation – nothing new to report.

4.4.7 Pay – Active Duty/Retired

4.4.7.1 Several locations in New Mexico and Arizona were phased out of the conus-COLA program. The increase in the BAH for these areas over the past years was designed to offset the loss of the conus-COLA.

4.4.8 Awards

4.4.8.1 Nominations are being solicited for the following awards:

4.4.8.1.1 American Indian/Alaska Native Commissioned Officer of the Year Award

4.4.8.1.2 Asian American Commissioned Officer of the Year Award

4.4.8.1.3 Stanley J. Kissel Award for Outstanding Health Services Professional of the Year

4.4.8.1.4 Joseph Garcia Jr. Award for Outstanding Junior Health Services Professional of the Year.

4.4.8.2 Please contact CDR Palma with ideas for nominees

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4.4.9 Chief Consultant Position for Optometry

4.4.9.1 Update regarding the Chief Consultant recommendation process:

4.4.9.1.1 It has been pointed out to CAPT Hatch that the request that optometrists express their views and preferences on recommendations for the IHS Chief Consultant position to their respective Area Chiefs is not appropriate in Areas where the Area Chief may be a nominee themselves. In these situations, as well as in the California and Nashville Areas where we still have no representative designated, CAPT Hatch personally welcomes your comments and recommendations in strict confidence and will convey them anonymously at the Area Chiefs meeting. You can reach CAPT Hatch by phone or email as noted below.

4.4.9.1.2 Six nominees have confirmed their willingness to serve if appointment. They are, in alphabetical order:

Brown, Clifford
Farrar, Curtis
Candreva, Michael
Ketcher, Greg
Richardson, Larry
Schleisman, Terry

4.4.9.2 CAPT Hatch is still waiting for responses from five other nominees by the end of this week. CAPT Hatch will be sending to all IHS optometrists the CV's, vision statements and supervisor support statements for the above and any additional confirmed nominees. CAPT Hatch appreciates your involvement in this process. Let CAPT Hatch know if you have additional suggestions, comments. Richard A Hatch OD FAAO Chief Clinical Consultant for Optometry Indian Health Service richard.hatch@ihs.gov 505/722-1332, fax 505/722-1747 PO Box 1337, Gallup NM 87305

5. Meetings and Recruitment Activities

5.1.1. AOA Federal Services Chiefs – 01/23/2005. CAPT Ketcher attended and gave the following report:

5.1.2. AOA wants unified membership with AFOS. This means that optometrists will not be allowed to joining AFOS without also becoming AOA members. All section chiefs were opposed. No final outcome at the present time.

5.1.2.1. There has been an approximately \$150 per year reduction in the ORSP for Air Force optometrists due to overstaffing.

5.1.2.2. A letter of thanks was drafted to the I.H.S. for their assistance in helping PHS officers obtain ORSP.

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5.1.2.3. The VA wants schools of optometry to guarantee placement of externs. This could potentially result in fewer externs available for I.H.S. rotations. No final outcome at the present time.

5.1.2.4. CAPT Ketcher submitted the following issues at the AOA Federal Services Chiefs from feedback regarding what PHS optometrists would like from the AOA in 2005

- 5.1.2.4.1 Licensure by endorsement
- 5.1.2.4.2 More loan repayment contracts for O.D.s through I.H.S.
- 5.1.2.4.3 Civil service GS reclassification of PHS optometry positions
- 5.1.2.4.4 Title 38 pay for PHS optometrists
- 5.1.2.4.5 Residency accreditation issues
- 5.1.2.4.6 Federal Service vs. private sector pay disparity
- 5.1.2.4.7 "What is the AOA doing for employed optometrists now?"
- 5.1.2.4.8 Increase PHS optometrists at other agencies and headquarters
- 5.1.2.4.9 VA laser issues/Scope of Practice
- 5.1.2.4.10 Line item budget for optometry
- 5.1.2.4.11 Area optometrist at each Area Office with budget and support
- 5.1.2.4.12 Geographic mobility vs. patient care for commissioned corps promotions
- 5.1.2.4.13 Re-visiting the commissioned corps \$100 special pay
- 5.1.2.4.14 Optometrist identity
- 5.1.2.4.15 Increase technician, assistant and other support staffing
- 5.1.2.4.16 Board Certification - Competency Issue
- 5.1.2.4.17 New National Board for VA residents only
- 5.1.2.4.18 Resident Recruitment

The complete 2005 PHS report from the AOA Sections Chief Meeting is posted on the IHS Optometry Web Board.

5.1.2.5 CAPT Ketcher is awaiting AOA's response to these issues

5.1.3. SECO - 02/23 – 02/27/2005. CDR Keith Cespon and Dr. Tracy Crane will be attending. A recruitment booth will be present in the exhibit hall. Optometrists interested in attending may register on-site or on-line at <http://www.secointernational1.com/seco2005/index.cfm>

5.1.4. AFOS –CDR Cespon will be attending. AFOS is held in conjunction with SECO. CDR Cespon will be invited to the March OPAG meeting to give a report.

5.1.5. I.H.S. Flagstaff Meeting – 04/13 – 04/14/2005. For doctors and health technicians planning on attending the Navajo Area 2005 Optometry Continuing Education Conference - please register for the conference by emailing Susan Atkinson, Director of Continuing Education at Southern California College of Optometry. Her email address is satkinson@scco.edu. If you are a doctor needing continuing education credit you must provide Ms. Atkinson your name as it appears

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on your license, your address, state of licensure, and license number. Please register by March 1.

The meeting is at the Flagstaff Radisson Woodlands hotel, (928) 773-8888. Be sure to tell the Radisson you are part of this conference. Book your room as soon as possible to be assured the government rate. To learn more about the hotel visit their website at <http://www.radisson.com/flagstaffaz/>

5.1.6. COA – 06/06 – 06/10/2005 – CDR Palma is planning to attend and will give her report at the July OPAG meeting.

5.1.7. 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.

5.1.8. 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.

5.1.9. 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.

5.1.10. FSO – PHS may be requested to sponsor the FSO meeting in 2009. CDR Candreva will be attending the FSO meeting in November of 2005.

6. Action Items

6.1 CDR Nichols will present items from the OPAG meeting as needed to the HSO-PAC.

6.1.1 Next HSO-PAC Meeting Feb 4th, 2005. HSO-PAC meetings are held every other month.

6.2 Invite CDR Cespon to the next OPAG meeting since he is a representative for AFOS. OPAG hopes to have him report on his recruitment activities at the various meetings.

6.3 Invite CAPT Hudson and LCDR Bellware to the August OPAG meeting to speak about the HSO PAC Recruitment Subcommittee activities.

6.4 Invite Dr. Tracy Crane to the March OPAG meeting to give a report on the civil service pay update

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7 OPAG Meetings

7.1 Next meeting scheduled for March 02, 2005 at 11:00 CST.

7.1.1 CAPT Richard Hatch, CDR Keith Cespon, and Dr. Tracy Crane will be invited as guests at the next meeting.

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

7.3 Meeting adjourned at 12:30pm

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

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