

## OPAG Minutes 04/01/2020

MISSION: Represent and advocate for the professional discipline of optometry and its Commissioned Officers, civil servants, contract and tribal optometrists serving within the Public Health Service and affiliated services.

### **OPAG Voting Members**

Present:

- LCDR Laura Alexander (Chair)
- CDR Patrick Britton (Chair-Elect)
- LCDR Hanna Fylpaa (Executive Secretary)
- CDR Gregory Smith
- LCDR Albert Licup
- LT Matthew Geiger
- CDR Sarah Stienbarger

Absent/Excused:

- LCDR Jill Thompson
- LT Davis Staley

### **Liaisons and Non-Voting Members**

- CAPT Dawn Clary
- LT Regina Sullivan

### **Approval of Minutes**

Motion to approve minutes from 02/05/2020: CDR Greg Smith

Second: LCDR Albert Licup

No objections. Minutes approved by unanimous consent.

### **Subcommittee Chair Reports**

1. **Administrative Management:** CDR Patrick Britton  
Nothing to report.

2. **Awards:** LCDR Hanna Fylpaa  
Most OPAG voting members submitted their recommendation for each OPAG award. Strong applicants were nominated for each award and nominations are encouraged again next year as each nominee was deserving of an award. Dr. Laura DeWitt was selected for the Lester Kaplan Award, CDR Christopher Cordes was selected for the Edward Hamilton Award, and LCDR Emily Mathiak was selected for the Richard Hatch Junior Optometrist Award. Awards will be presented at the USPHS Scientific Symposium or the IHS Biennial Meeting.

3. **Communications:** LCDR Jill Thompson  
Nothing to report.

4. **Data & Evaluations:** LCDR Albert Licup

Nothing to report. LCDR Licup was deployed during the most recent meeting and minutes have not yet been released.

**5. Policy:** LT Matthew Geiger

Nothing to report.

**6. Recruitment (Ad Hoc):** CDR Sarah Stienbarger

Concern over inner-service transfers for service members with over 8 years of service. CAPT Willis Marsh was open to considering applicants over the 8-year mark that were willing to work in IHS, however there is uncertainty moving forward. RADM Orsega was present during this conversation but is very busy at this time. CDR Stienbarger has encouraged the potential applicants to begin the application process online. There are 4 other civil services IHS optometrists considering a transfer to the Commissioned Corps but no one has begun the application process at this time.

**7. Stakeholder & Community Engagement:** LT Davis Staley

No update.

**8. Technical Readiness:** LCDR Alexander for CAPT Robert Chelberg

Advanced Readiness Training information email was sent last week with upcoming dates. Enrollment begins today for July start date. CDR Stienbarger sat in on conference call and reports that each PAG will need to provide a webinar and can be as simple as reporting what is learned at an optometry conference, such as the Biennial IHS meeting. Additionally, to qualify for Advanced Readiness Training, applicants must have 5 years of service in the Commissioned Corps and have earned Field Medical Readiness Badge (FMRB) which does require that you have deployed. As an optometrist we may not be required to deploy quickly for eye care needs but can be deployable for many other duties (logistics, nurses aid, IT, etc). Advanced Readiness Training is being promoted as preparing officers to go quickly and go well.

**9. Training, Education, and Mentorship:** CDR Gregory Smith

HSPAC subcommittee met in early March 2020. The prior meeting was July 2019, so quite a time gap between meetings. Still working to get the program better established. Would like to provide more guidance on how to sign up as a mentor/mentee and simplify this process; create FAQ; provide training to mentors/mentees; set expectations such as requirement to meet a certain number of times per year; provide summary sheet back to subcommittee with feedback on the process; standardize guidance for mentors/mentees. None of these goals have a timeline. Set to meet next quarter but date not yet set.

PHPAG has created a pilot program called "peer-to-peer" that matches similar ranks for information exchange, offering professional advice and guidance, with the goal to develop relationship with officers of the same rank and develop a network. There is a PowerPoint that outlines SOP on how this is rolled out. HSPAC has expressed interest in other PAGs. There is no firm roll-out date for other PAGs but was under discussion at the subcommittee meeting. CAPT Clary thinks this could be very beneficial for OPAG and supports this program, recommends rolling this out and having periodic

meetings for each rank. Could put together a short template summary of each rank's meeting that could be submitted to HSPAC.

### **Stakeholder Engagement Reports**

- **Chief Clinical Consultant:** CAPT Dawn Clary  
IHS Biennial Meeting is not canceled. If travel is allowed then CAPT Clary will be there in person but meeting will proceed virtually at least. Working with MBKU and they are in the process of organizing 2 virtual meetings ahead of ours so kinks should be worked out.  
Corps Officers need to get COVID-19 training done.  
CAPT Clary plans to put together an email with what is going on during COVID-19 in regards to optometry. Most optometry clinics have canceled all routine care but there are some clinics that are still requiring optometrists to continue routine care.
- **CDC Liaison** – LT Regina Sullivan  
Webinar discussing how to build capacity for vision health in different health programs. A lot of programs (such as Heart Disease, Healthy Wise Woman, Diabetes) do not include a “vision component” in their research and evaluation measures, even though it is well known that chronic conditions affect vision. The webinar discusses a toolkit that is available to all health professionals that offers ways to incorporate vision health into chronic disease programs. This could be a great way for optometry to collaborate with other departments and programs.  
Online toolkit sets up how to assess vision and health in a community to determine where the need is and how to build effective partnerships to help support what can be implemented, and offers interventions to improve vision and eye health in the community and how to evaluate the impact of the vision health intervention. For additional information contact LT Sullivan.

### **Discussion Topics/ Q&A**

- IP/BP/BCIP - no concerns or issues.
- Promotion – question at HSPAC All Hands Meeting last week was how COVID-19 may affect this promotion cycle. There are no updates regarding potential delays.
- HSPAC All Hands Meeting – primary focus was COVID-19 response and readiness for officers. Officers are advised to be prepared for deployment, have go-bags ready and be prepared to deploy, Corps Care is in place and information can be found on CCMIS website to help provide assistance with readiness and preparedness, resiliency tips, and finding a health balance during deployments. On-call deployments do not apply at this time. There is a mandatory 14-day quarantine for all officers. Three readiness deployment requirements are suspended (PHU, BLS, APFT). COVID-19 training deadline has been moved to April 10, 2020.
- Contact LCDR Alexander with any issues obtaining or maintaining board certification or licensure due to COVID-19 response.
- Pre-deployment health summary is required by April 15. Please see CCMIS secure message.
- LT Geiger and CDR Smith report that they did receive an email from COA last week that the USPHS Scientific Symposium is postponed 1 year and will be held at the same location.
- Discussion on telehealth and telemedicine. LCDR Fylypaa reports her clinic has implemented some telehealth in optometry (problem-based consults only) and other departments. AOA provided a free webinar on telehealth for optometry regarding billing/coding and changes to typical telehealth standards that are allowed and have been relaxed in light of COVID-19. Facilities in Oklahoma are looking into telemedicine and will be doing test runs this afternoon. CDR Stienbarger was approached within the past year by a company promoting telehealth in regards to the village travel

that her clinic provides, this company was promoting routine and full exams via telehealth, but their standards were not up to the standards set by her clinic (example: not viewing retina, not evaluating contact lenses on the eye, etc) so CDR Stienbarger's clinic has not implemented this type of telemedicine.

- CDR Cordes has been deployed in response to COVID-19.
- LT Sullivan will be deployed next week.
- In early February LCDR Licup was given 3-hour notice before a 29-day deployment. Initially deployed to Honolulu to provide screening services for 1 week, then transferred to O'Hare in an administrative role as the acting station OIC for 3 weeks.

### **Good/Welfare**

LCDR Fylpaa expecting Baby Fylpaa any day.

LT Staley's wife is also due any day if baby has not been born already.

LT Jill Thompson is on maternity leave until mid-April.

**Meeting Adjourned at 0845 AKST by LCDR Laura Alexander.**

Upcoming OPAG meetings:

June: I.H.S. Biennial Meeting

August 5, 2020

October 14, 2020

December 2, 2020

All meetings are:

08:00 Alaska

09:00 Pacific

10:00 Mountain

11:00 Central

12:00 Eastern