

## OPAG Minutes 08/05/2020

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)
- LCDR Jill Thompson
- LCDR Albert Licup
- LT Matthew Geiger
- LT Davis Staley
- CDR Gregory Smith
- CDR Sarah Stienbarger

Absent/Excused:

- CDR Patrick Britton (Chair-Elect)
- LCDR Hanna Fylpaa (Executive Secretary)

### Liaisons and Non-Voting Members

- CAPT Dawn Clary
- CDR Christopher Cordes
- LT Regina Sullivan
- CAPT Robert Chelberg

### Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve minutes from 04/01/2020: LCDR Albert Licup

Second: LCDR Jill Thompson

No objections. Minutes approved.

### Subcommittee Chair Reports

1. **Administrative Management:** LCDR Laura Alexander for CDR Patrick Britton

No updates.

2. **Awards:** LCDR Laura Alexander for LCDR Hanna Fylpaa

OPAG Award Recipients:

Edward Hamilton Award: CDR Christopher Cordes

Lester Kaplan: Dr. Laura DeWitt, OD, FAAO

Richard Hatch Junior OD: LCDR Emily Mathiak

IHS Student Award: no nominations received for the year.

3. **Communications:** LCDR Jill Thompson

Nothing to report. Meeting has changed to quarterly and most recent was cancelled due to deployments.

**4. Data & Evaluations:** LCDR Albert Licup  
Nothing to report.

**5. Policy:** LT Matthew Geiger

Submitted report of no changes to SOP for OPAG but requests changes to subcommittee positions prior to July 31 if updates are necessary.

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

No one currently in application process. A few people from other services attempting to transfer and working on necessary waiver paperwork. Waivers have not worked in the past but interested parties are being encouraged to try because the Surgeon General and ASH would like an increase in numbers, but fewer people are interested in the Commissioned Corps, especially given low promotion rates. Still promoting through Colleges of Optometry and talking with students. LCDR Alexander brings up HSPAC requesting two senior officers, preferably O-6, to volunteer to help interview transfer applicants in the future.

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

Nothing to report. Has reached out to other subcommittee chairs but nothing to report at this time.

**8. Technical Readiness:** CAPT Robert Chelberg

CAPT Clary and CDR Stienbarger going through Advanced Readiness Program. CDR Stienbarger has excelled wonderfully through courses the past few weeks and requested that OPAG works to come up with a technical course together to help satisfy requirements for both of them. Possibly a COVID/IHS-focused discussion that people can call in to, mirroring what was done at the AFOS level and with CDR Cordes and CDR Smith helping to facilitate. Discussion on what COVID has done to our clinics and how we are responding and how everyone is doing. CAPT Chelberg will keep pushing for this and then provide information so anyone can participate.

LCDR Alexander congratulates CAPT Clary and CDR Stienbarger for being selected to participate in Advanced Readiness Program. Thank you for representing OPAG and taking on this new challenge.

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

Nothing to report.

### **Stakeholder Engagement Reports**

#### **Chief Clinical Consultant: CAPT Dawn Clary**

- Virtual IHS Biennial Eye Care Meeting was fairly successful, 29 hours of continuing education hours offered, participants should have received their certificates. Contact CAPT Clary if you have not received your certificate or you note any errors.
- Submitted to headquarters the updated COVID guidelines for re-opening optometry practice 5-6 weeks ago but has not received a response. If any questions from clinics CAPT Clary has forwarded this information as well as any additional information she has been provided by IHS optometry clinics. Contact CAPT Clary if you need guidance on reopening. Special concern for Navajo Area as they have been hit especially hard, but they are moving forward slowly and cautiously.

- Thank you to CDR Gregory Smith and CDR Christopher Cordes for representing IHS at AFOS COVID continuing education presentation.
- Concerns regarding optometry promotion: there should discussion on how to look at this, increased monitor and mentorship for officers that have not been promoted, come up with ways to help O-5 officers promote to O-6 and continue on with their successful careers in IHS.
  - CAPT Chelberg would like to be involved in this discussion to help mentor officers through this next promotion cycle, as he has been in this position.
- Civil Service: areas submitting for GS-13 and GS-14 but have not heard back if things have moved forward, may be delays due to COVID.

#### **CDC Liaison: LT Regina Sullivan**

- No updates at this time.

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

- IP/BP/BCIP: CDR Cordes went through process this month, he reports that everything is online/electronic, no paper forms anymore, all done through CCMIS and gets forwarded to supervisors for signature.
- Congratulations LT Geiger for upcoming promotion to LCDR effective April 2021.
- HSPAC Update: All Hands Meeting end of June 2020
  - Mainly discussed COVID response and readiness
  - Extension of PHU and BLS through end of September 2020
  - APFT expires soon it must be completed by September 30, 2020.
    - LCDR Jill Thompson completed APFT last week because her pregnancy waiver was expiring, but the system was locked for entering results. She contacted her area liaison who suggested emailing RedDog to have her waiver lifted so she could enter results.
    - LT Geiger had RedDog remove the waiver so he could enter his APFT so that it is completed and done. LT Geiger emailed the generic RedDog email address and got a response fairly quickly. CAPT Chelberg reports the same.
- AMSUS: currently planning for early December 2020 in Maryland, pending COVID
  - Deadline for posters/papers/awards just passed. – no report/concerns.
  - CDR Steibarger reports AMSUS is considering some sort of hybrid in-person/virtual.
- Call to Active Duty/Recruitment Concerns:
  - CDR Stienbarger has been involved with call to active duty for other HSO categories, just not optometry.
- CAPT Clary regarding retirement block – current plan is that October will provide information regarding retirement.

#### **Good/Welfare**

- Well wishes to all those who are currently on deployment or recently deployed.

#### **Meeting Adjourned at 0835 AKST by LCDR Laura Alexander.**

Upcoming OPAG meetings:

14-October-2020

All meetings are:

08:00 Alaska

09:00 Pacific  
10:00 Mountain  
11:00 Central  
12:00 Eastern