

OPAG Minutes 04/03/2019

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 Member

Present:

- CDR Christopher Cordes (Chair)
- LCDR Laura Alexander (Chair-Elect)
- LT Hanna Fylpaa (Executive Secretary)
- LT Jill Thompson
- LT Albert Licup
- LT Matthew Geiger
- CDR Sarah Stienbarger
- CDR Gregory Smith

Absent/Excused:

- CDR Patrick Britton

Liasons

- LT Emily Mathiak
- CDR Robert Chelberg
- LT Regina Sullivan

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve minutes from 02/06/2019.

1st Motion: LCDR Alexander

2nd Motion: CDR Gregory Smith

No objections. Minutes approved.

Subcommittee Chair Reports

1. **Administrative Management:** LCDR Laura Alexander
No report.

2. **Awards:** LCDR Laura Alexander
OPAG Award Recipients selected.
Richard Hatch Award: LT Matthew Geiger
Lester Caplan Award: Dr. Chelsie Park
Edward Hamilton Award: CDR Ryan Manning.
Student award is pending; deadline for submission is May 1, 2019. A reminder email has been sent and still awaiting nominations.
Awards will be officially presented at COA Conference in Minneapolis by CDR Chelberg.

3. **Communications:** LT Jill Thompson
Report from HSPAC Communications call in March. Committee is redoing the standard operating procedure (SOP) and looking for volunteers to assist with that project.

The committee is distributing commemorative videos for HSPAC 60th anniversary. They put together a book with stories and pictures, it will be available through Amazon, and hoping to accept pre-orders at the COA Symposium. Looking for 508 Compliance Officers, another PAC has offered to train the officers. An official signature should be utilized in emails when communicating in an official PAC or PAG capacity as a subcommittee chair. Official signature block is posted on the PAC website.

4. Data & Evaluations: LT Albert Licup

No report. Next committee meeting is scheduled April 10, 2019 and will update at next OPAG meeting.

5. Policy: LT Matthew Geiger

Committee remains in a holding pattern until June 2019.

6. Recruitment (Ad Hoc): CDR Sarah Stienbarger

IB has reapplied back into the Commissioned Corps. PJ is still in the application process as well. These two applications have been received but do not appear to be moving forward. The most recent update is that the therapist applications will be processed first before getting to HSO applications. Other groups at the Recruitment and Retention meetings are finding similar difficulties with the application process. There is uncertainty regarding who has applied and how to help applicants move forward.

7. Stakeholder & Community Engagement: CDR Patrick Britton

No Report.

8. Technical Readiness: CDR Robert Chelberg

HSPAC is ready to move forward with Advanced Readiness and offer training to PAGs. Advanced Readiness will involve additional training and will make officers more deployable. Optometrists are primarily in clinical roles so unsure how this will impact optometrists, it may aid in transition to RDF teams. More information will be coming this summer.

9. Training, Education, and Mentorship: CDR Greg Smith

Turnover in committee leadership has led to holding pattern.

Stakeholder Engagement Reports

- **Chief Clinical Consultant:** CAPT Dawn Clary – not present.
- **CDC Liaison:** LT Regina Sullivan
 - The CDC is broken up into different groups and is not very involved with vision. Vision Health Initiative (VHI) is a small group that has a separate budget to do everything related to vision. It is currently under Diabetes and Translation. Unfortunately at this time, the CDC is only looking at vision as it relates to diabetes. The VHI is trying to change that, trying to work on surveillance and get different cooperative agreements out there to look at other diseases such as glaucoma and primary medicine/vision screening setups.

- In the future LT Sullivan will go into greater detail on some of the high-level initiatives that the VHI is focusing on.

Discussion Topics/ Q&A

• IP/BP/BCIP:

- LT Fylpaa submitted her paperwork very early and her pay rate has not changed from 2018.
- CDR Smith has had difficulty getting signature from finance contact in the area office.
- LT Mathiak anticipated change in pay consistent with updated HPSP this month, however her pay was unchanged from 2018 rates.

• Call to Active Duty – New OD's

- Two applicants in the system but unsure what step they are at in the process.
- CDR Stienbarger will send an email to CAPT Davonda Roberts.

• Call to CPO last week.

- CDR Cordes and LCDR Alexander were present to discuss concerns, many repeat topics were discussed.
- Optometrists are doctors that qualify as physicians within Medicare and Medicaid and generally work in 1-2 provider clinics. We are in clinical roles a vast majority of the time.
- Getting optometrists called to active duty is a challenge. A few prominent challenges are pay, retention, and limited duty stations offered within IHS. Filling positions involves recruiting specific types of people that are willing to work for the pay offered. CPO is pushing to solicit new applicants for advanced readiness program.
- There is a cache of optometry equipment in DC for deployments. OPAG will work to determine what is in that.
- No update on promotion rates and promotion process.
- Current CPO is in the final year of her term. Unknown if meetings will continue with new CPO that begins in 2020, but it is a good relationship to have and helps to bridge communication gaps.

• Title 38 Pay for GS

- Albuquerque, Oklahoma Area, Navajo Area received approval for back pay for optometrists.
- May require getting the union involved.

Good/Welfare

- Send updates for Eye Care Notes to LCDR Alexander.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:29am by CDR Cordes.

Upcoming OPAG meetings:

05-June-2019

All meetings are:

08:00 Alaska
09:00 Pacific
10:00 Mountain
11:00 Central
12:00 Eastern