

Lester Caplan Award

I am nominating Valerie Sharpe, OD, consultant optometrist and clinical applications coordinator (CAC) at the Chinle Hospital, for the Lester Caplan Award. In addition to providing high quality, patient centered eye care at the Chinle Service Unit; Dr. Sharpe has demonstrated exceptional ability as a leader in the implementation of the Indian Health Service (IHS) Electronic Health Record (EHR) throughout the IHS. She has also been instrumental in insuring appropriate billing & coding within our discipline. Most recently she has played a significant role in helping our hospital to achieve “meaningful use” of the EHR to be in compliance with Federal mandates and to receive the offered incentives. Dr. Sharpe has also been active as a lecturer at IHS continuing education meetings and other national optometric meetings. Her efforts have been broad in scope, influencing not only the profession of optometry, but providers in other disciplines as well.

Within the IHS, the transition from paper medical charts to an electronic health record has been a long and arduous process that has required a significant amount of teamwork at both the local and national level. Due to her experience with the VA electronic medical record, Dr. Sharpe quickly became a go to person when the Chinle Hospital Optometry Department first converted to the EHR in 2005. In fact, Dr. Sharpe had already been working behind the scenes as the Chair of the Information Systems Management Committee prior to this time, she also served as the Chair for the EHR implementation committee. She received formal training as a CAC in 2005, but went far beyond that role at our hospital. She has proven instrumental in the roll-out of numerous templates for many departments throughout the hospital. She regularly offers consultation to administrators, supervisors and providers at other IHS facilities to assist them with appropriate template design, EHR implementation and trouble shooting. Currently, Dr. Sharpe also serves as the Chair of the National IHS Optometry EHR committee and also is responsible for maintaining the IHS Optometry list serve.

Dr. Sharpe has been generous with her time in providing lectures to IHS optometrists at the local and national level. She has provided lectures on EHR usage to enhance providers understanding of the use of clinical applications features inherent within the EHR. She has also lectured on billing & coding at the BEIHS meeting in 2008 and will provide another update at the BEIHS meeting in May of 2012. She provided a lecture titled “EHR: Lessons Learned in 2010” and one titled “Board Certification – A Primer” at the NAIHS Optometry Biennial Meeting in Durango, CO in 2011. In March of 2012 she will again be lecturing to pediatricians and obstetricians at a combined IHS meeting in Telluride, CO. She had previously provided a lecture titled “Red Eye Overview” to the same group in 2004 and also “The Red Eye, How to Treat, Whem to Refer” in 2010. Finally, she has lectured on the clinic topic of ocular trauma on numerous occasions. Specifically, she co-presented the lecture titled “On-Call - The OD in the ED” at the American Academy of Optometry meetings in San Francisco (November 2010) and Boston (October 2011). She also co-presented a lecture titled “Ocular Trauma: Tips & Terminology” at the NAIHS optometry meeting in Durango (April 2011) and at the IHS Advances in Indian Health Meeting in Albuquerque (May 2011).

Dr. Sharpe's influence has also been significant on the development of a robust residency program at the Chinle Hospital. She holds adjunct faculty status at The Ohio State University College of Optometry, the Southern California College of Optometry, and the Pacific University School of Optometry. Her commitment to mentoring residents extends far beyond day to day clinic interactions. She provides valuable insights that broaden the perspectives of our residents to include many practical aspects of what it means to be a well rounded optometrist.

Dr. Sharpe has also donated significant time as a member of multiple affiliations, including the Volunteer Optometric Service to Humanity (VOSH) and the American Academy of Optometry (AAO). She has participated in over 12 VOSH eye care missions to Mexico. With respect to the AAO, Dr. Sharpe currently serves as a member of the Admittance Committee and has actively participated in the primary care section for many years.

In conclusion, it is my impression that Dr. Sharpe deserves recognition for her sustained, dedicated service as a model optometrist within the IHS. Her efforts that go far beyond what is normally expected of a consultant optometrist have benefited many patients and providers at the service unit and national level. Dr. Sharpe's accomplishments testify to her dedication to the profession of optometry and her eagerness to share her knowledge and experience with others is worthy of recognition.