



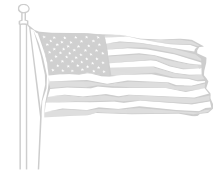
# Paraoptometric Certification

August 2003

Newsletter—AOA Commission on Paraoptometric Certification

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

It is my privilege to address you this quarter with some great news! We have completed the 2003 AOA Congress in San Diego, California. It was an awesome event and the para-professionals came out in force. The first ever Commission on Paraoptometric Certification breakfast was well attended and those providing testimonials provided great momentum. We also met new friends and spent some time with some old ones. CIBA Vision was recognized for their on-going support, and Sue McAteer, CPOT was announced as the Paraoptometric of the Year.

Now, on to more specific Commission business. While attending the San Diego Congress, we conducted our first annual Commission breakfast. We discussed advances made in the certification process and the successes of the Commission in seeking national accreditation. We also recognized the outstanding accomplishments of Darlene Byrd, our AOA Staff. After the breakfast, we met with many of our fellow paraoptometric family members at different functions and trained hard. That was the fun part of the trip; the rest of the trip was definitely business and hard work.



Our first encounter with more intense business included a meeting with State Organizations Executive Directors.

They had a few concerns about the certification process, some of which I feel obligated to share with my fellow certified paraoptometric. The first was the lengthy and costly process of the certification process. It was requested that something more simplistic and less costly be implemented to aid the practices with a low-end market. The reply was, we are implementing a certification process that is recognized by a national organization from outside of the AOA organization. This process has guidelines like other para-organizations, such as dental assisting and hygiene, and paralegals. We are trying to align with the national criteria that allows us the same professional recognition that other para-professionals in the medical community possess.



Discussion followed with the question of loyalty of those offices that support paraoptometric education. It is perceived by many of the optometrists that after training a paraoptometric with office funds they are more marketable to other practices. I appeal to your personal ethics that you commit to the practice that supports you and that you and your optometrist communicate the expectations and two-way support. If you discontinue your employment with your optometrist after he/she commits to supporting your education, you will make it difficult for the next paraoptometric.

**Continued on next page**

Extra Info Issue

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR (CONTINUED)

Please communicate with your doctor and make sure you understand the office's expectations. If you are an office manager, please get a signed contract from your staff personnel. On the other hand, if you work in an office that hires robots (paraoptometrics that can only do what they are told), hang in there until you can locate an optometrist that appreciates your willingness and desire to learn. There are optometrists in the field that we need to turn into believers, so be patient and contact the CPC or the paraoptometric section members on ideas that will assist you in ways to educate your optometrist on education and certification. You don't have to re-invent the wheel, you have experienced family members

in the organization. Just start networking.



Other questions pertained to the availability of the test. Our answer was simple, we are just getting started and in 2004 we will deploy the practical to every school of Optometry that can meet the guidelines and then to the state organizations meeting the AOA/CPC guidelines. It is essential that state organizations follow the guidelines. It will be the state's responsibility to meet the guidelines or the CPC CANNOT certify the testing. Our guidelines are clear and the timelines are necessary to ensure that the candidates are given a fair opportunity to succeed at taking a fair exam. States

will have to sign a contract or risk having the testing cancelled. The guidelines are critical in testing and the process is being refined to ensure fairness and consistency.

The final concern was the cost for getting the staff certified. Optometrists that have recently begun to practice may find the process too costly. Networking is the answer; get with the nearest para-organization to find the least expensive method for getting the staff certified. The price of certification testing hasn't been increased since the tests' inception. We can't make the test less

expensive, but if the testing can be done locally, it will save the expense of sending staff members too far away. This should only be for the beginning optometrist, the continuing education offered at the Congress and other places can't be replaced in a busy office. Offices are too busy to train on every aspect of the job, and the networking and learning new procedures will never be replaced within an office setting. Regional meetings offer up-to-date information that will aid staff members in keeping up with current trends. Our grand finale was the practical exam held at Dr. Sanet's office. Thanks to Dr. McMains and Robert Nurisio, we held a very successful practical examination. I want to personally thank the optometrists who took time with their technicians and aided them in gaining the maximal points in most stations. The average time in the field was 3-4 years, and it was refreshing to see the motivation to excel from the technicians.

The next practical is a test program to be held in concert with the Maine Paraoptometric Association (MPA) in December 2003. Scheduling and planning cannot be a last minute event, and those states that are interested in bringing the practical to their region must give a minimal of six months notice. It is mandatory that a CPC member be present when the test is given. A handbook is being published for those organizations that may be interested. We are pleading with state organizations to plan well in advance of the necessary dates. Another fact not well-known is, testing centers are being brought closer to all locations without additional charges. Our testing agency has agreed to assist our organization in bringing the test closer to those who are seeking certification. This change has had an impact on the test results waiting time. Test results are scheduled to be returned to the candidate within six weeks. There have also been comments about the way our test have been proctored, we need your feedback. We can't repair the process if we are unaware of the issues. Please keep us informed. The CPC is constantly working to improve the testing process, we need our fellow paraoptometrics to communicate. We police our process continually and we are applying for accreditation that is respectable around the world.

Our special thanks, to the AOA, the Board of Trustees, Darlene Byrd, and Kim Dixon for supporting us in bringing the most respectful and consistent test available. We look forward to seeing you and your family members in Orlando, Florida in 2004. Blessing upon all of you,

**Lynn Lawrence, CPOT**

## ENHANCE YOUR PRACTICE THROUGH STAFF CERTIFICATION

**M**odern optometry demands that paraoptometrics accept and provide a key role in patient care. Patients and third party payers want to be assured they are receiving care from a highly qualified team – from the doctor to the receptionist. Paraoptometrics must receive continual education and training throughout their careers in order to fill this role. Certification can present an opportunity for paraoptometric career enhancement and advancement through education and recognition of skills and knowledge at various levels of expertise.

To become a certified paraoptometric, our testing agency will administer an examination to the candidate. On successful completion of the examination, the paraoptometric receives the title Certified Paraoptometric (CPO). In preparation for the exam, call the AOA (800-365-2219 ext. 210) for an application and a handbook explaining both the testing procedure as well as material content covered on the test. To assist the on-the-job trained certification candidate, the Commission on Paraoptometric Certification has prepared a workbook containing study material on practice management, ophthalmic optics and dispensing, pre-testing procedures, special procedures (such as contact lenses, tonometry, visual-field testing), refractive status of the eye and ocular anatomy. A preparatory course may also be available at local, state, regional and national meetings. If testing at state, regional or national meeting sites is a hardship, you can request a special testing center examination for an additional \$125.00 fee.

To become a certified paraoptometric assistant, a person must first either earn the CPO title or request eligibility through special criteria. Our testing agency will administer an examination. On successful completion of the examination, the paraoptometric receives the title Certified Paraoptometric Assistant (CPOA). To assist the on-the-job trained certification candidate, the AOA Paraoptometric Section has published a book entitled Self-Study Course for Paraoptometric Certification. A preparatory course may also be available at local, state, regional and national meetings.

To become a certified paraoptometric technician, the highest level of certification, a person must earn the title of CPOA. Our testing agency will administer a written examination to the candidate. After successful completion of the written examination, the technician will then be eligible to sit for a proctored skills evaluation. On successful completion of both examinations (written and skills), the paraoptometric receives the title Certified Paraoptometric Technician (CPOT). A workbook to assist the on-the-job trained technician is being developed. An optional preparatory course may also be available at local, state, regional and national meetings.

The Commission on Paraoptometric Certification seeks the support of the entire Optometric community. Certification allows education of the paraoptometric to begin immediately on his or her entry into the profession with the paraoptometric workbooks, preparation courses and examinations. The certification program strives to enhance the knowledge of the paraoptometric and provide optometry a means to educate and confirm the education of its paraoptometric staff.

**Billie Taylor, CPOT**

### ASK THE EXPERT

**Ask the expert is a new item that will be included in every issue of the CPC Newsletter. The CPC welcomes your questions and urge you to submit your questions to [CPC@aoa.org](mailto:CPC@aoa.org).**

**Question:** Am I considered a professional?

**Answer:** If you act like a professional, you are a professional. The simple answer is YES. The dictionary defines professional as “having to do with a profession; a person who belongs to a recognized profession. As a Paraoptometric, you are perceived as a professional by the patients you serve. You are entrusted with many of the aspects of vision care and provide an important service to humanity. You are part of the profession of Optometry.

The term “professional” is used in many walks of life. Sports; the arts; medicine; acting; law, etc. Assisting in the practice of Optometry is your chosen “walk of life”. By seeking certification through education and experience, you are enhancing your status as a professional. This is the way I see it.

Notice: Responses printed in the “Ask the Expert” column are the opinion of one individual and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Commission on Paraoptometric Certification.

## MORE ABOUT OPTOMETRY'S MEETING

The first annual Certification Breakfast at Optometry's meeting was quite a success and plans are underway for the next years breakfast.

The events included an overview of the Commission on Paraoptometric Certification, where we were, where we are and where we are going. Lynn Lawrence, CPOT, Chair of the CPC facilitated the introductions and overview. Billie Taylor, CPOT, CPC Member introduced those who graciously provided testimonials to the entire audience.

Gordon Jennings, OD (right) remarked that "certification is the answer optometry is looking for." Dr. Jennings is in private practice in Virginia and currently has all of his staff certified.



Teresa Taylor-Back, OD (left) explained the importance of delegating tasks to her professionally, certified staff. Dr. Taylor-Back is in private practice in the state of Wyoming.



Marcey Brickner, CPOA (right) delighted the audience with her family optometry history. Marcey's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all optometrists while she and her sister Mandy are proud paraoptometricians. Marcey remarked that the AOA Certification Program has provided her with dignity, knowledge, self esteem and the opportunities to give so much more to the patients.



Amy Endo, CPOT, Past Chair of the AOA Paraoptometric Section and Elaine Bowers, CPOA provided testimonials recognizing each others accomplishments and as certified personnel.

The event was open for anyone in attendance at Optometry's Meeting. Certification badges indicating each level, were distributed. Please contact [CPC@aoa.org](mailto:CPC@aoa.org) for a free badge to wear with pride!

## ACCREDITATION—IT'S MORE THAN A PIECE OF PAPER

You have reached a level of certification and you have a certificate from the AOA's Commission on Paraoptometric Certification showing your achievement. Chances are, however, you are not aware that the CPC will soon be submitting their application for national recognition by the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA).\*

The NOCA represents 45 health-related organizations accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), which sets the standards for certification. NCCA is the accreditation arm of NOCA, the membership association for certifying agencies. NOCA provides both technical and educational information concerning certification practices.

Unlike licensure, which is a state credential and its standards can vary from state to state, certification recognized by NOCA is a national credential assuring a stan-

dard of individual achievement has been met and is accepted in every state.

The purpose of accrediting certifying organizations is to help assure the health, welfare, and safety of the public by assessing professional competence. NCCA uses peer review as a means to establish accreditation standards, to evaluate compliance with these standards, to recognize those organizations demonstrating compliance, and to provide the public the means to identify those certification programs that meet these standards.

There are 21 standards. To earn or to maintain accreditation by NCCA, the Commission must meet all of the standards, providing documented evidence of compliance for each standard.

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**CONGRATS!****CONGRATULATIONS to the new Certified Paraoptometrics (CPO's) listed below. Each passed the CPO examination between March and June, 2003:**

Tabitha Allen	Polly Dicocco	Luanne Jones
Lauren Allen	Dotty Dravenstott	Emily Jones-Anderson
Amy Antonson	Monica Dreibelbis	Denise Kalousek
Renee Averitt	Wendy Dreyer	Mary Kamp
Crystal Babcock	David Durham	Angela Kargenian
Michele Baierl	Janet Duttlinger	Gwen Kelly
Elizabeth Bailey	Tiffany Ebensperger	Amy Kennedy
Tracey Bakken	Patricia Esposito	Cynthia Kent
Danielle Bender	Christina Evans	Erica Kerbs
Helen Bengtson	Donna Evers	Kristin Kerin
Heather Benson	Jody Ewing	Tami Keune
Cathy Berent	Tai Falconer	Bristol Kinderman
Crystal Berry	Stephanie Fetch	Susan Kinney
Audrey Bird	Catherine Fincher	Shelley Klimesh
Jenae Blomberg	Christine Fink	Melissa Kyger
Brenda Bochart	Thomas Fischer	Angie Lambert
Rebecca Boggs	Janette Fogel	Lisa Lambert
Rhonda Boursaw	Laura Fortney	Wendy Lenox
Susan Renne Bovenkamp	Amy Fox	Ellen Lewis
Shelly Bradley	Rachael French	Joselyn Leyva
Rita Brassfield	Valerie Funderburg	Nicholas Littlefield
Shondra Brown	Margaret Futral	Marsha Lloyd
Brenda Brydge	Stephanie Gann	Michelle Lloyd
Judy Burleson	Brenda Garcia	Erica Loerts
Kristy Cain	Miriam Garcia	Julie Logan
Juanita Cain	Rita Garcia	Sarah Lohr
Cricket Callis	Nancy Herlach	Kelly Luecke
Tonia Campbell	Christina Goncar	Susan Luedtke
Kim Carbonel	Donna Gonzales	Cindy Lunsford
Nancy Cardinal	Katie Gooch	Cynthia Ann Maling
Melonie Carlson	Brandy Gordon	Kay Marshall
Katherine Carroll	Kristina Gray	Cyndie Matthews
Laura Chapman	Thomas Gray	Stephanie Matus
Valerie Chavez	Alyssa Gritton	Kerri Maxwell
Sarah Anne Christensen	Lisa Grothe	Susan Maxwell
Angela Cleveland	Chris Grue	Kristi Mayfield
Marsella Clifton	Rafael Gutierrez	Patricia McCollum
Deborah Collier	Kacy Hall	Rebecca McConnell
Tonya Coniglio	Samoan Hall	Rachel McCoy
Ferahnaz Cooper	Theresa Hall	Debbie McCrady
Sylvia Cordova	Paul Halliday	Michaeline McGlohn
Joann Cornell	Sally Hammond	Shannon McIntyre
Abigail Cousins	Dori Hampel	Donna Melerine
Olga Covarrubias	Brad Harris	Jackie Menger
Neryssa Crisp	Samantha Harris	Tawnya Miller
Kelly Daley	Renee Hartman	Ruth Mills
Stacie Decker	Susan Henning	Dana Mixer
Amber Denton	Sarah Hensley	Sylvia Molgren
Peggy Dereg	Sharon Herald	Deb Montel
Carol Lyn Dickinson	Joni Hill	Jodi Moreth
	Theresa Hoppe	Susi Morris
	Tammy Hosterman	Lola Nasief
	Amy Lain Hostetter	Cindy Neumann
	Katherine Hourt	Julie Nicholson
	Lora Jacks	Chrissy Noel
	Evangeline Jaramillo	Angela Olson
	Elizabeth Jessie	Judy Ovington
	Christopher Jones	Joi Pearson

(Continued on rear)

**Commission on  
Paraoptometric Certification  
Members**

**Chair, Lynn Lawrence, CPOT**  
**Vice Chair, Al Levin, OD**  
**Member, Billie Taylor, CPOT**  
**Member, Pat Schneider, CPOT**  
**Public Member, Bill Samuels**  
**AOA Staff, Darlene Byrd and  
Kim Dixon**

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Website: [http://www.aoa.org/  
students/para.asp](http://www.aoa.org/students/para.asp)



**CONGRATS! (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)**

Jillian Pellegrini  
Sara Plath  
Dixie Plumley  
Richard Powell  
Erica Prentice  
Charlisha Price  
Tammy Profit  
Virginia Purdy  
Yvonne Purtymun  
Julie Reindl  
Katrina Roat  
Beverly Rocha  
Amber Rochefort  
Charity Rogers  
Kindy Rogers  
Carole Rosen  
Jon Sacker  
Anita Sallee  
Ajelica Sanchez  
Gregory Schell  
Kathlene Schohl  
Maria Schwartz  
Marta Sciulli  
Stephanie Seagraves

Tauri Semroska  
Jennifer Sheerin  
Brenda Shoffner  
Deborah Shonka  
Debra Siebels  
Joann Sipola  
Lolita Smiley  
Thomas Smith  
Rebecca Snell  
Jill Snodgrass  
Amy Souder  
Janae Steidinger  
Giselle Steinman  
Melissa Stewart  
Teresa Stine  
Helen Stoddard  
Denise Strader  
Jeannine Stuart  
Betty Sublett  
Suzette Suggs  
Stephanie Szalapski  
Yvonne Taylor  
Debra Tope  
Amanda Tritten

Dorothy Udell  
Keila Valleau  
Elizabeth Vanbergraft  
Julie Varisco  
Judie Ann Vaughn  
Cyndi Vinson  
Romie Walker  
Roderick Walker  
Melissa Walsh  
Dawn Warner  
Kimberly Wegrzyn  
Barbara White  
Carmela Whitson  
Kimberly Wilhelms  
Melissa Williams  
Maggie Wilson  
Sharon Wingo  
Rosemarie Woolley  
Tia Wynne  
Shirley Yocum  
Cindy Zimmerman  
Gwendolyn Zuleger

NCCA's standards focus on five categories: purpose, governance, and resources (5 standards); responsibilities to the public and consumers of certification (4 standards); assessment instruments (9 standards); recertification (2 standards); and, maintaining accreditation (1 standard).

To meet the first category of standards the Commission must provide evidence that its purpose and governance has autonomy in decision making, free from undue influence, and has sufficient financial resources and support staff. The second category requires publication of a variety public documents including policy and procedures and handbooks and brochures on certification the certification programs and activities.

A category requiring continuing review concerns assessment instruments wherein the Commission must constantly analyze, define, refine and performance and tasks; review established standards of competence for each skill level; maintain established quality control procedures used to score, interpret, report, and document results. To help the Commission in

**SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITION**

**CIBA Vision** has sponsored the AOA Paraoptometric Certification program for three consecutive years and has committed to the fourth year. This program owes it's success to the volunteers and the generous sponsorship of CIBA Vision.

