

Optimum VA



The Official Newsletter of the
National Association of Veterans Affairs Optometrists
Summer 2017

NAVAO Board Members

Nancy Wong, O.D., Ph.D., F.A.A.O.

President

nancywong@navao.org

Jennifer Gustafson, O.D., F.A.A.O.

Vice-President

jennifergustafson@navao.org

Janel Chou, O.D., F.A.A.O.

Secretary

janelchou@navao.org

Makesha Sink, O.D., F.A.A.O.

Treasurer

makeshasink@navao.org

Brian Kawasaki, O.D., M.B.A., F.A.A.O.

Immediate Past President

briankawasaki@navao.org

Katherine L. Wang, O.D., F.A.A.O.

Membership Director

katherinewang@navao.org

Kevin Mercado, O.D., F.A.A.O.

Director of Technology

kevinmercado@navao.org

Molly McGinty-Tauren, O.D., F.A.A.O.

Director of Events

mollymcgintytauren@navao.org

David Galeoto, O.D., F.A.A.O.

Newsletter Editor

davidgaleoto@navao.org

Issue Highlights

[President's Column](#)

[Updates From The NAVAO Board](#)

[Insight From A Residency Director](#)

[When Glasses Are Not Enough](#)

[Upcoming Continuing Education](#)

Optimum VA Newsletter is a quarterly publication distributed in January, April, July and October.

Deadline for submissions are 2/27, 5/31, 8/31, and 11/30.

Please e-mail any submissions to the newsletter editor

President's Column



Nancy Wong, O.D., Ph.D., F.A.A.O.

This is an election year for NAVAIO officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer). According to the NAVAIO Constitution, the President and Vice-President have a two term limit. The Secretary and Treasurer may serve an indefinite number of terms.

Here is the Nomination and Election Process as per NAVAIO By-Laws:

"The President will call for nominations three months before the annual business meeting of every odd-numbered year. Nominations may come from any Member for him or herself or for another Member. Each member may nominate one person per office (including him or herself) and may not nominate the same person for more than one office. Nominations are closed thirty days after the call for nominations. The individuals receiving the most and second-most number of nominations for each office will be contacted by the teller of ballots (an individual selected by the Immediate Past President) and those who wish to run will be given an opportunity to submit a brief profile and statement for publication prior to the election. An individual may run for only one office in an election. Balloting will be performed electronically. Results shall be reported to the teller of ballots, votes will remain confidential. Candidates receiving a plurality for each office will be declared the winner. Election results will be formally announced at the annual meeting. In the event of tie, a runoff will take place at the annual meeting."

Please submit your nominations for President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer to our Teller of Ballots, Dr. Brian Kawasaki, via email (briankawasaki@navao.org) no later than Monday, July 31, 2017.

Nominations may come from any member for him or herself or for another member and will be kept confidential by the Teller of Ballots. Once the nomination period has closed, Dr. Kawasaki will contact the individuals receiving the most and second-most number of nominations for each office and those who wish to run will be asked to submit a brief profile and statement for publication on our website prior to the election. Elections will be held online and only members with active membership for 2017 will be able to vote (resident and clinical/research fellow members do not have voting privileges).

From the Editor



David Galeoto, O.D., F.A.A.O.

Welcome to the summer 2017 edition of Optimum VA. The newsletter committee and I thought it would be interesting to hear from a residency director and get their opinion on how optometric residencies have changed over the years. In this newsletter Nancy Shenouda-Awad, OD, FAAO has been kind enough to provide her insight.

The newsletter committee and I also thought it would be beneficial to hear from someone who works with our visually impaired Veterans. Rachel S. Hill, MA, COMS, is one of our dedicated blind rehabilitation outpatient specialists (BROS). It is important for all of us to know, especially those newly appointed to the VA and those working at a community based outpatient clinic

(CBOC), what options are available to those with visual impairment and who are the individuals responsible for their care.

As always, the issue concludes with a large list of upcoming continuing education opportunities.

Please remember this is an election year, so get your nominations ready and don't forget to vote in the upcoming election.

I hope everyone is having a wonderful summer. I know I am; with school out, my commute to work has been GREAT! If anyone has comments or suggestions regarding the newsletter, please feel free to contact me.



Updates from the NAVAO Board

Jennifer Gustafson, O.D., F.A.A.O.

VICE-PRESIDENT

No updates at this time.



Janel L. Chou, O.D., F.A.A.O.

SECRETARY

Hi NAVAO members, hopefully everyone is staying cool! Please continue to check out the NAVAO website to access the conference call minutes at NAVAO.org. There have been many new VHA Directives and updates to review. The COPE approved EES Coursework Committee has been hard at work and we are excited to see more continuing education opportunities available. There have been recent updates in the electronic medical record system at the VA and will be integrating soon. It will be interesting to see the future of the VA and how it unfolds with this new Presidency. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at janelchou@navao.org.



Makesha Sink, O.D., F.A.A.O.

TREASURER

No updates at this time.



Brian Kawasaki, O.D., M.B.A., F.A.A.O.

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

No updates at this time.



Molly McGinty-Tauren, O.D., F.A.A.O.

DIRECTOR OF EVENTS

No updates at this time.



Katherine L. Wang, O.D., F.A.A.O.

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

VA Optometry residents should know that the NAVAIO is offering 10, \$350 scholarships* to active resident NAVAIO members for use at the American Academy of Optometry. Residents may register for membership at www.navao.org.

To apply for the scholarship, the 2017-2018 VA resident should submit a statement of intent for use of the scholarship for the American Academy of Optometry in 200 words or less and also a current Curriculum Vitae. **The deadline for the scholarship application is Friday, September 1st.** The statement of intent and their CV should be submitted to: scholarshipapps@navao.org. **Recipients of the scholarship will be announced around October 1st. Residents must be present at the NAVAIO reception to receive their scholarship.**

*Scholarship funding is provided by IET (International Engineering Technology) Foundation.

I would encourage all current NAVAIO members to encourage other staff optometrists at their VA facility to join NAVAIO.



Kevin Mercado, O.D., F.A.A.O.

DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY

We hope to launch a new NAVAIO-provided online CE section to the website soon! Be on the lookout for updates. As always, please contact me if you have any questions, problems, comments or suggestions about the NAVAIO website.

Insight from a Residency Director

Nancy Shenouda-Awad, OD, FAAO
Attending Optometrist
Optometry Residency Program Director
West Haven VA Connecticut Healthcare System

1. Tell me a little about yourself, how long have you been a residency supervisor?

I have been in the VA system for about 12 years and an attending for 10 years now. I was lucky because I had a tremendous amount of mentor support and was able to get my VA appointment right out of residency. About 9 years ago, I was honored to be given the opportunity to take over the residency directorship. I am grateful for the opportunity as it has made a great impact on me as a practicing optometrist and an individual in general.

2. Tell me a little about your clinic, how many residents do you supervise each year?

We are very fortunate at our VA clinic to have many unique opportunities. First, we are affiliated with a major teaching medical center and have an array of ophthalmology specialists and residents employed at our clinic. This gives us an opportunity for Optometry to have our own resident-run specialty clinics where they get to work directly with Ophthalmology attendings in the co-management and treatment of the patients. In addition, our own attendings also run a very busy clinic. In total, we have 8 attendings in addition to 3 attendings at our specialty low vision rehabilitation clinic. We usually have 4 residents with us each year that split their time between the Primary Care & Ocular Disease Clinic and Low Vision Rehabilitation Clinic.

3. What changes have you seen in the residency program over the last decade?

The profession of optometry has changed over the last decade. In the eyes of our patients, we are no longer viewed as those who just refract. I feel that new graduates, residency programs, and patients are more aware of the need for residency training. As a residency program, every year, we strive to be more up to date with current technology and practice. The residents today are part of a new era, learning how to use technology in their practice and seeing that it is becoming more of a norm than a luxury. Our program facilitates learning new methods of practice and novel treatments and encourages residents to keep up with new management guidelines. In addition, our program has always been about training the residents to be well-rounded clinicians. Our focus has been on submitting scientific / academic posters, participating in major optometric meetings, writing and publishing papers and knowing how to successfully put together and present a lecture. All of these skills have become a core part of our program.

4. Do you feel new optometry graduates are more or less prepared as they enter residency compared to 5 or 10 years ago?

I believe that it takes a lot of courage and dedication for a student to make a decision to not go into practice immediately following school and instead pursue a residency (with a much lower salary) which is not even a requirement for licensure. I strongly believe that this is a fundamental quality of a candidate coming in for a residency interview that has remained the same over time. As more residency positions are added, opportunities are becoming more unique and specialized. As this is the case, today's graduates have definite advantage compared to ten years ago. They have the advantage of being able to select from an array of specialized residency programs that were not offered in the past. As for the graduates themselves, dedication and the will to learn are essential and have always been the qualities that I looked for in our candidates.

5. What changes have you seen with new optometry graduates in the last 5 to 10 years?

Each year has been different in the number of and interest of applicants. Overall, I have found that within the past decade, there is more interest in doing a residency. I believe, with the increased demand for more training and certification, new optometry graduates have been more eager to do a residency, despite the fact that it is not a requirement. They understand that advanced training will lead to better opportunities in their future career. Graduates are aware of the benefits and opportunities that a residency will bring.

6. Is there anything specific you try to teach each resident?

I always tell residents that we are training them to be exceptional attendings and practitioners. Self-motivation and independence come with confidence. You need good training so that each resident can recognize and develop those qualities. I have watched each resident leave here and pursue phenomenal opportunities which are the best proof that they developed those qualities. I hope we lead each one of them by being good examples.

When Glasses Are Not Enough

Rachel S. Hill, MA, COMS
Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROS)
James J. Peters VA Medical Center Eye Clinic

Some of you may not be aware of the care provided to visually impaired, legally blind and totally blind Veterans through the VA. The VA provides rehabilitation and training that will address many goals the Veteran have for increased safety and independence. Training may include skills to address routine daily tasks such as reading, writing, medication management, cooking, independent travel using a white cane, sensory integration, use of low vision equipment and hobbies. As the population continues to live longer, the number of legally blind Veterans continues to rise. So, how does the VA provide these services? The VA allows Veterans, in conjunction with the visual impairment services team (VIST), to determine the best method for meeting their goals for safety and independence. Team members often include members from ophthalmology and optometry, primary care, prosthetics, social work, psychology, physical medicine and rehabilitation, and members of the Blinded Veterans Association.

The VIST coordinators serve as case managers who act to coordinate services for visually impaired Veterans and active duty Service Members. VIST Coordinator's work to identify individuals with newly identified visual impairments, review benefit information, and provide educational programs relating to visual impairments and blindness. Additionally, VIST Coordinators arrange for an appropriate level of training to increase functional independence for veterans by making referrals to blind rehabilitation centers (BRC), blind rehabilitation outpatient specialists (BROS), visual impairment centers to optimize remaining sight (VICTORS), vision impairment services in outpatient rehabilitation (VISOR), and low vision clinics. There are approximately 165 VIST coordinators throughout the country.

BROS provide an individualized outpatient training program. A BROS must be certified in at least two of the following areas: orientation and mobility, vision rehabilitation therapy or low vision therapy. BROS are also able to assist with minor computer access issues. Orientation and mobility training is a sequential mode of instruction to teach the visually impaired to integrate their remaining senses, and often use a long white cane, to safely negotiate their environment. There are approximately 63 BROS throughout the country and additional blind rehabilitation specialists housed at the Blind Rehab Centers to meet Veterans' needs. The VA medical centers house the VIST programs and serve the CBOCs and Veterans through various means of face to face and electronic methods.

The rehabilitation and training can occur in a variety of settings such as a BRC of which there are twelve nationwide, a VICTORS program, a VISOR program or an outpatient program. For some Veterans, an intensive residential program, like at the BRC, will best meet their needs; other Veterans may prefer to be served in their home community. The typical Veteran will stay at a BRC for roughly 4-8 weeks depending on their individualized treatment plans. The BROS are able to provide follow-up instruction. BROS deliver individualized instruction in the home, place of work, and community environments for those who do not choose a residential placement. Goals developed by the team can include daily living skills needed for cooking, cleaning, food shopping, grooming, communication, independent travel, use of technology and hobbies. Some Veterans prefer a shorter stay than offered at the BRC or only need intensive instruction in specific skill sets and may choose to attend the VISOR program which is 10 days. Again, communication between the residential center, VIST coordinator and VIST team is imperative for Veteran/Service Member success.

When a standard low vision exam is unable to meet the needs of those in various stages of vision loss, then Veterans/Service Members have the option to attend a low vision clinic. The Certified Low Vision Therapist (CLVT) works as part of an interdisciplinary team with an ophthalmologist(s) and/or optometrist(s) who manages ocular health, provides the clinical low vision examination, prescribes optical devices and approves treatment plans. The CLVT collaborates with these doctors who prescribe optical solutions such as spectacle and/or contact lens corrections, magnifying devices such as hand-held or stand magnifiers, telescopes, spectacle-mounted magnification devices, and field enhancing devices such as prisms and reverse telescopes. The technology movement of the past few years has made many things accessible for our low vision and blind patients. The blind rehab specialists try to assist veterans with integrating the available technology into their daily lives. It is a collaborative effort between the clinical staff and the CLVT to meet the Veterans' needs.

Training is not only provided to the Veteran/Service Members but also to their families by the VIST and BROS. Information is provided about the cause of their blindness and often sensitivity trainings are provided to the family. This allows for some empathy and a more realistic understanding of the frustrations and successes the Veterans' experience. Learning to reintegrate to the world through auditory and tactile means is difficult and time consuming. Everything seems different and common phrases such as "it's over there" all of a sudden are incredibly vague. Imagine the monumental task of trying to tactually line up the charger to plug in your cell phone! Traveling from your bedroom to the restroom or locating the shampoo in the shower are all examples of things that must be addressed. People who are experiencing vision loss often feel a loss of independence. The VIST programs offer group support and counseling as well as recreational outings. The VIST coordinator and BROS also try to coordinate services that may be available through state and local agencies.

This is a brief overview of the comprehensive programs available through VA. The VA is actively seeking and providing training to the visually impaired through totally blinded Veterans/Service Members. It is truly a multidiscipline collaboration of care that is highly individualized. The goal is to provide prompt and efficient care to restore a level of independent functioning and safety to our Veterans and Service Members. So when glasses alone are not enough to meet your patient's needs, please be advised there is a VIST team waiting to help.

Upcoming Continuing Education

AUGUST 2017

Glaucoma in the Gorge

- Aug 12 – 13, 2017
- Best Western Hotel & Convention Center
- 10 CE credits

UABSO CE & Alumni Weekend

- Aug 18 – 20, 2017
- UAB School of Optometry
- 18 CE hours

ANNUAL Optometry Academe

- Aug 20, 2017
- UMSL JC Penny Conference Center, St Louis, MO
- 8 CE hours

110th SCOPA Annual Meeting

- Aug 24 – 27, 2017
- Myrtle Beach Marriott Resort & Spa at Grande
- 21 CE credit hours

SEPTEMBER 2017

MOA/DOA Fall Conference

- Sept 8 - 10, 2017
- Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa & Marina

Primary Care Update

- Sept 9 – 10, 2017
- Oklahoma College of Optometry
- 10 CE hours

Annual Fall Conference – Glaucoma Update 2017 & Head to Toe Inter-professional Management of Diabetes

- Sept 9 -10, 2017
- Ft Lauderdale, FL
- NSU main campus
- 12 credit hour

Kentucky Optometric Association (KOA) Fall Conference

- Sept 15 – 17, 2017
- 20 CE hours
- Crown Plaza Hotel, Louisville, KY

International Vision Expo & Conference West 2017

- Sept 13 – 16, 2017
- Las Vegas, NV
- Sands Expo & Convention Center
- 310+ CE hours total

Alumni Weekend

- Sept 15 – 16, 2017
- by IU school of Optometry
- 16 CE hours
- Bloomington, IN

New Mexico Optometric Association Mid-Year Convention

- Sept 20 - 23, 2017
- Drury Plaza Hotel in Santa Fe
- 8 CE hours

16th International Conference on Clinical Experimental Ophthalmology

- Sept 18 – 20, 2017
- Hilton Zurich Airport
- cost: \$799

Wisconsin Optometric Association Convention & Annual Meeting

- Sept 21 – 24, 2017
- Kalahari Resort & Conference Center
- 26 CE hours total

Nebraska Optometric Association Annual Convention

- Sept 22 – 24, 2017
- Younes Conference Center Kearney, NE
- 15 CE hours

CE in Austin

- Sept 23 – 24, 2017
- hosted by University of Houston College of Optometry
- 16 CE credit hours

Rosenberg School of Optometry

- Sept 23 – 24, 2017
- San Antonio, TX
- 16 CE credit hours

AHI Orlando Optometry Seminar 2017

- Sept 24, 2017
- Orlando, FL
- Hyatt Place Orlando Airport Hotel
- 10 credit hours
- Cost: \$160

Great Western College of Optometry

- Sept 28 – Oct 1, 2017
- Oregon Convention Center, Portland, OR
- 70+ CE hours total, 22+ per OD

CE Sarasota

- Sept 30, 2017
- Ritz-Carlton Sarasota, Sarasota, FL
- 9 CE credit hours

OCTOBER 2017

Indiana Optometry's Fall Seminar

- Oct 4 – 5, 2017
- Indiana Memorial Union Building, Bloomington, IN
- 14 CE hours

Michigan Optometric Association Fall Seminar

- Oct 4 – 5, 2017
- Lansing Center
- CE hours TBD

Forum on Ocular Disease

- Oct 5 – 11, 2017
- The Swan Dolphin Hotel, Orlando, FL
- 18 CE hours

University of Alabama School of Optometry

- Oct 5, 2017
- 2 CE hours

American Academy of Optometry 96th Annual Meeting 2017

- Oct 11 -14, 2017
- McCormick Place, Chicago, IL
- Nearly 300 hours of lectures/workshops

2017 Missouri Optometric association Annual Convention

- Oct 12 -15, 2017
- St. Charles Convention Center
- 15 CE credit hours

North Dakota Optometric Association's 2017 Annual Congress & Exhibition

- Oct 19 – 20, 2017
- Holiday, Inn
- Fargo, ND

Envision New York

- Oct 20 – 22, 2017
- SUNY College of Optometry
- 50 CE hours total, 21 per OD

Virginia Optometric Association Fall Conference

- Oct 21 – 22, 2017
- Omni Richmond Hotel, Richmond, VA
- 8 CE hours

2017 Annual Education Conference

- Oct 21 – 23, 2017
- Mystic Marriott Hotel & Spa, Mystic, CT
- 18 CE hours

CE in Fort Worth

- Oct 21 – 22, 2017
- Dallas Fort Worth Marriott Hotel & Golf Club
- 16 CE hours

Georgia Optometric Association Fall Education Conference

- Oct 21 – 22, 2017
- University of Georgia, Hotel and Conference Center, Athens, VA
- 18 CE hours

Connecticut Association of Optometrists' Annual Education Conference

-Oct 21 – 23, 2017

-Mystic Marriott Hotel & Spa

-Groton, CT

Idaho Optometric Physicians 2017 Annual Congress

-Oct 26 – 28, 2017

-Sun Valley Resort, Sun Valley, ID

-26 Total CE hours, 19 per OD

NAVAO Committees

The **Executive Committee** is responsible for the management of the business of the NAVAO and advises the President on all policy matters of the Association. The Executive Committee consists of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Immediate Past President.

Executive Committee Members:

- Nancy N. Wong, O.D., Ph.D. F.A.A.O. (President and Chair)
- Jennifer Gustafson, O.D., F.A.A.O. (Vice-President)
- Janel L. Chou, O.D., F.A.A.O. (Secretary)
- Makesha Sink, O.D., F.A.A.O. (Treasurer)
- Brian S. Kawasaki, O.D., M.B.A. F.A.A.O. (Immediate Past President)

The **Finance Committee** monitors funds and assists the Treasurer in the collection and disbursements of funds. The committee also projects future financial demands and sources for the Association.

Finance Committee Members:

- Makesha Sink, O.D., F.A.A.O. (Treasurer and Chair)
- Glenn Saxon, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Brooke A. Smith, O.D., F.A.A.O.

The **Membership Committee** recommends means for membership retention and growth and monitors pertinent data about the membership.

Membership Committee Members:

- Katherine L. Wang, O.D., F.A.A.O. (Membership Director and Chair)
- Amber Louprasong, O.D. (Vice-Chair)
- Janel L. Chou, O.D., F.A.A.O. (Executive Committee Liaison)
- Rachel Caywood, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Theresa Chong Fernandez, O.D., F.A.A.O.

- Mattew Horton, O.D.
- Joy A Kerns, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Rebecca Kline, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Susie L. Lim, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- David N. Lynne, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Jarett Mazarella, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Jennifer L. Monarrez, O.D.
- Heather Spampinato, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Nina T. Tran, O.D.

The **Events Committee** is responsible for planning and overseeing all NAVAO functions, including the annual NAVAO Business Meeting, Reception, and Dinner.

Events Committee Members:

- Molly B. McGinty-Tauren, O.D., F.A.A.O. (Director of Events and Chair)
- Jennifer Gustafson, O.D., F.A.A.O. (Executive Committee Liaison)
- Sarah Dieter, O.D.
- Rebecca Forman, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Carla Gilbertson, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Kelly H. Thomann, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Katherine L. Wang, O.D., F.A.A.O.

The **Newsletter Committee** is responsible for maintaining a formal communications link with the membership and assists the Newsletter Editor with publishing the quarterly NAVAO Newsletter.

Newsletter Committee Members:

- David Galeoto, O.D., F.A.A.O. (Newsletter Editor and Chair)
- Nancy N. Wong, O.D., Ph.D. F.A.A.O. (Executive Committee Liaison)
- Treacy Adamo, O.D.
- Carrie Ho, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Terry Luk, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Michelle Matson, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Tam Nguyen, O.D., M.S., F.A.A.O.
- Kelly Richmond-Revy, O.D.
- Dawn N. Tomasini, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Robert Wang, O.D., F.A.A.O.

The **Technology Committee** is responsible for communicating with the membership via online technology. The Committee will maintain the NAVAIO website, make suggestions for its improvement or enhancement, and conduct events requiring technological support as directed by the Executive Committee.

Technology Committee Members:

- Kevin Mercado, O.D., F.A.A.O. (Director of Technology and Chair)
- Brian S. Kawasaki , O.D., M.B.A., F.A.A.O. (Executive Committee Liaison)
- Justin Cole, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Jason Powell, O.D., F.A.A.O.
- Richard J. Zimbalist, O.D., F.A.A.O
- Brett Zwolensky, O.D., F.A.A.O.