



Dear ENT Advocacy Network Member:

February 14, 2020

Legislative and political activity directly affects our practices and our patients. As a leading advocate for otolaryngology-head and neck surgery, we hope you enjoy reading this edition of The ENT Advocate, your premier source of advocacy information for the specialty!

Lead Story

AAO-HNS Leads Effort to Oppose Audiology Direct Access Legislation

The Academy recently [spearheaded letters strongly opposing federal legislation](#) (H.R. 4056/S. 2446) that would grant audiologists unlimited direct access to Medicare patients without a physician referral. The letters, which were addressed to House and Senate leadership, were signed by 120 national, state, and local medical societies. The AAO-HNS thanks all the organizations that signed the letter to support our efforts to defeat this legislative proposal.

Legislative & Political Reports

Congressional Committee Advances Bipartisan Surprise Billing Proposals

On February 12, the House Ways and Means Committee marked up the [“Consumer Protections Against Surprise Medical Bills Act” \(H.R. 5826\)](#), legislation created to protect patients from unanticipated medical bills. The Academy is encouraged that H.R. 5826 takes patients out of the middle of billing disputes and includes a mediation process with no qualifying threshold. The AAO-HNS will continue our advocacy efforts, as House leadership must now create a final legislative package for consideration by the full House of Representatives. Any surprise billing legislation signed into law should protect patients by including Independent Dispute Resolution without payment benchmarks.

AAO-HNS Responds to Request for Feedback on Medicare Scope of Practice

The Academy joined 103 other physician organizations in [sending a letter to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\) Administrator Seema Verma](#) responding to the administration’s request for information on scope of practice. The January 16 letter strongly urged CMS to consider the vast difference in education and training of physicians and other healthcare professionals and not weaken or eliminate current Medicare regulations requiring physician supervision of nonphysician professionals. The AAO-HNS also submitted individual comments to the agency describing scope of practice concerns directly impacting the specialty.

AAO-HNS Continues Advocacy Efforts to Address the Youth E-cigarette Epidemic

On February 4, the AAO-HNS, along with 75 other physician and public health groups, [sent a letter to the U.S. House of Representatives](#) expressing strong support for H.R. 2339, the Reversing Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019. Among other key provisions, this legislation would ban all flavored tobacco products including menthol cigarettes and prohibit all online sales of e-cigarettes. This legislation represents a major step forward to reduce tobacco use, the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S.

AAO-HNS Provides Expert Opinion on Seven Evidence Reviews

Following an extensive review process by multiple AAO-HNS Committees and the Physician Payment Policy (3P) Workgroup, [the AAO-HNS submitted responses to seven new Blue Cross Blue Shield Association \(BCBSA\) Evidence Street reviews](#): Implantable Bone-Conduction and Bone-Anchored Hearing Aids, Cochlear Implant, Eustachian Tube Balloon Dilatation, Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery for Chronic Rhinosinusitis, Middle Ear Implantable Hearing Aids, Steroid-Eluting Sinus Stents, and Treatment of Tinnitus. The updated 2020 otolaryngology evidence summaries, which will be published by BCBSA in March, will be used by member plans to determine coverage policies.

AAO-HNS Continues Advocacy on Balloon Ostial Dilatation for Treatment of Chronic Rhinosinusitis

On February 5, [the AAO-HNS sent comments](#) to Blue Cross Blue Shield's Federal Employee Program (BCBS FEP) opposing their medical policy designating balloon ostial dilatation (BSOD) as experimental/investigational. The comment letter highlights the AAO-HNS/F Position Statement and Clinical Consensus Statement on BSOD, as well as provides extensive literature support demonstrating the procedure is consistent with the standard of care.

Action Requested

First 50 Extended- Monthly Payment Option Available

We are so close! Help us reach our goal of garnering 50 \$1,000+ contributions to [ENT PAC—the specialty's political action committee](#). "First 50 Investors" will have exclusive access to a conference call series with high-ranking officials from Congress and the Administration, as well as help ENT PAC start strong for 2020. [Make or increase your 2020 ENT PAC contribution](#) to join the prestigious ranks of our "First 50" ENT PAC Investors. Unable to donate \$1,000+ today? Please consider a monthly recurring donation of \$85! Questions? Contact entpac@entnet.org.

AAO-HNS Needs Your Support! Say No to S. 2446

Now, more than ever, the AAO-HNS needs your support. Legislation has been introduced (S. 2446/H.R. 4056) that seeks to designate audiologists as "practitioners," and allow them direct access to Medicare beneficiaries without a physician referral.

Your voice is needed to amplify our efforts on Capitol Hill and ensure your patients continue to receive the highest quality care. Please click [here](#) to access the action alert on the AAO-HNS Advocacy website. The alert includes a sample letter you can use to make your voice heard and stop this misguided legislation from advancing in Congress. With your support, we can make a difference! Tell Congress to say no to S. 2446/H.R. 4056 "The Medicare Audiologist access and Services Act of 2019."

Register Now for AAO-HNS/F 2020 Leadership Forum and BOG Spring Meeting!

Join your colleagues at the AAO-HNS/F 2020 Leadership Forum & BOG Spring Meeting, May 1-3, in Alexandria, VA, for a weekend of leadership discussions, Board of Governors (BOG) meetings, informative speakers, advocacy updates, and mentoring/networking opportunities. Registration is complimentary to AAO-HNS members who are otolaryngology practitioners; however, [you must register to attend](#).

Sincerely,

David Boisoneau, MD
BOG Legislative Affairs Committee Chair
and the AAO-HNS Advocacy Team

For more information, contact govtaffairs@entnet.org. Don't forget to bookmark [The ENT Advocate!](#)

If you no longer wish to receive important legislative and political updates via *The ENT Advocate*, please reply to this email with CANCEL ADVOCATE in the subject line.

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