Range of Issues Discussed During ASCO-AOA Joint Meeting

On March 21, the Boards of Directors of ASCO and the American Optometric Association (AOA) held a daylong joint meeting, their second joint meeting in two years. To start this year's meeting, which was held in Fernandina Beach, Fla., each organization reviewed its current challenges and initiatives. ASCO President Dr. Jennifer Smythe highlighted ongoing communications successes, including the Association's presence across media, including radio, digital and social (see accompanying article). Dr. Elizabeth Hoppe, Founding Dean of the Western University of Health Sciences College of Optometry, outlined interprofessional education initiatives at her institution and how ASCO and AOA can contribute to the national dialogue on improving patient outcomes, access to care and collaborative patient-centered care. Healthcare policy consultant Dr. Henry Desmarais reviewed the Affordable Care Act's impact on optometry and clinical practice, and the group discussed new payment models as well as the need to be vigilant with advocacy surrounding proposed changes to the Medicare program.

ASCO Secretary/Treasurer Dr. Richard Phillips moderated the afternoon session, which focused on post-graduate education and included a presentation by ASCO Immediate Past-President Dr. David Heath covering challenges and opportunities in residency education and subspecialization. AOA Trustee Dr. Christopher Quinn and Dr. David Damari, Dean of the Michigan College of Optometry at Ferris State University, spoke on the topics of continuing education evaluation and models for assessing continued competency in health professions.

Commenting on the importance of the joint meeting, AOA President Dr. Mitch Munson said "It is essential for the future success of our profession that there exists an ongoing collaboration between the AOA and ASCO. While the AOA stewards the advancement of optometric scope, ASCO must take the lead on providing an optometric curriculum which is commensurate with our advancing scope. Suffice it to say, one cannot happen without the other."

The meeting participants outlined next steps to include ongoing inter-organizational communication and collaboration, working together on developing coordinated responses for state affiliates requesting curriculum content and statistics, and continued joint dialog on subspecialization issues.