April 27, 2009

Dear Members,

To create awareness of and support for a new era of collaboration between the American Academy of Audiology (Academy) and the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS), it was my pleasure to share the stage with David Kennedy, MD, president of the AAO-HNS, during General Assembly at AudiologyNOW!®.

Dr. Kennedy received a standing ovation following his remarks that described our recent discussions focused on finding ways to collaborate for the benefit of our professions and ultimately the patients we serve. One focus of our discussions has been the Medicare Hearing Health Care Enhancement Act that was introduced by Congressman Mike Ross (D-AR) in the 110th Congress. We have discussed the possibility of AAO-HNS becoming an endorsing organization for the bill following minor changes to the legislation that would include language that:

- Reflects a spirit of collaboration and coordinated care between audiology and otolaryngology for the betterment of our patients; and
- Is consistent with the Academy’s practice policy guidelines and state licensure laws on the need for medical referral when indicated.

Once Legislative Counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives re drafts the bill, a process that can be lengthy, the modified language will be shared with the boards of the Academy and AAO-HNS. If the boards of both associations are then able to agree to the changes as drafted, we will move forward to share the modified bill with other endorsing organizations that we have been communicating with regarding the bill such as the Academy of Doctors of Audiology, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, and the Hearing Loss Association of America. When final language is approved, the bill will also be available on our Web site.

Unrelated to the Direct Access bill, Dr. Kennedy also commented in his address to the general assembly that both associations asked the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to revisit the CMS’s recent transmittals about the use of automated audiometry and audiology assistants. In response to the transmittals, the Academy submitted comments to CMS that reflected long-held positions on both subjects. The Academy’s position on automated audiometry recognizes that there could be potential for its use but that there is currently a lack of sufficient evidence on efficacy and reliability. With regard to audiology assistants, the Academy reiterated its stance that the duties and responsibilities of audiology assistants should be assigned solely by the supervising audiologist who maintains the legal and ethical responsibilities for all assigned activities that the audiology assistant provides. Note that the Direct Access bill would not contain provisions on either of these topics.

I encourage you to visit the Academy’s Web site for additional information on the announcements from General Assembly including the text of Dr. Kennedy’s speech and the Academy’s letter to CMS regarding the transmittals.

This is an exciting and monumental year for the Academy, and I look forward to our continued
partnership with AAO-HNS. The Medicare Hearing Health Care Enhancement Act gained significant momentum last Congress. With the backing of AAO-HNS, we look to see even greater support in the 111th Congress.

M. Patrick Feeney, PhD
President
American Academy of Audiology

Note: This message is not a press release and is intended for member information only.