In an effort to explain how the ABOto functions, we have created a series of informational communications which we will share with you over the next few months. We hope you find these communications helpful, and if you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact the ABOto office.

American Board of Otolaryngology Committees

The American Board of Otolaryngology consists of eighteen Directors who meet twice a year, once after the Oral Exams and once in the fall. The ABOto makes decisions and sets policy through a variety of committees composed of Directors which develop proposals for the full board to review on the last day of the meeting. In addition, some of the committees also meet by conference call throughout the year.

The committees include:

- Exam/Group Leaders
- Examiner Selection
- Maintenance of Certification
- Credentials and Ethics
- Finance
- Information and Liaison
- Nominating
- Strategic Planning
- Education

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee oversees and makes policy decisions regarding the ABOto financial operations. These functions include the day-to-day office operations, as well as those finances associated with the OTE (In-service exam), the Qualifying Exam, the Oral Exam, and MOC. In addition, the Finance Committee is charged with ensuring the long term solvency of the ABOto.

As practicing otolaryngologists (academic and private practice), the 18 ABOto Directors are sensitive to today's paradigm of increasing administrative costs (including professional dues) and diminishing clinical reimbursement. Given that fact, our working principal is to maintain all ABOto fees as low as possible while providing a secure and valid certification process and developing the programs to meet the evolving state and federal mandates for MOC.

ABOto income is derived primarily from the annual dues from lifelong certificate holders, annual fees from MOC participants, and the various exam fees. The ABOto periodically analyzes the expenses of each program and adjusts the charges so that each program covers its associated expenses. Annual dues are applied to general operating expenses.

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The most recent change in the fee structure is the MOC annual fee. Because the first three components of MOC were rolled out over the period of a few years, the charge for each component was established as they were made available. Now that all four MOC components are available, and all of the modules will be produced in association with Wiley-Blackwell/CE City, it is possible to have a single annual fee that covers all components. The new annual fee of $310 is actually a reduction in what the individual charges were, plus Part IV is now included. As more diplomates participate in MOC, it will be possible to reduce the fee even more in the future.

The ABOto incurs ongoing expenses to develop and ensure that the various examinations are consistent with the current practice of otolaryngology-head and neck surgery. The oral exams are particularly expensive because we use approximately 100 examiners who must travel and be housed in Chicago. The ABOto and the specialty are fortunate that the oral examiners do this very important task on a voluntary basis and receive no compensation for their time.

In addition, the ABOto employs seven full-time staff members at the ABOto office, which is located in Houston, Texas. The ABOto staff is responsible for coordinating the OTE (In-Service Exam), Certification Exams, and MOC process, as well as other administrative items.

The ABOto undergoes a yearly financial audit with an accredited accounting firm, and the organization has never had an unfavorable audit. The finance committee meets twice per year in person and communicates by conference call between the face-to-face meetings.

C Ron Cannon, MD
Treasurer