

George A. Williams to work as 123rd President of the AAO

01 January 2019 | News

Retina specialist and health policy expert to lead nation's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons



George A. Williams, M.D, today begins his term as the 123rd president of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO). Dr. Williams, a retina specialist, was elected by the Academy's community of 32,000 ophthalmologists in recognition of his scientific leadership and his deep commitment to advocating for improved patient care and reduced regulatory burdens. He will hold the office for one year.

Dr. Williams previously served on Academy education and health policy committees, as Secretary for Federal Affairs, and as an Academy Trustee-at-Large. Throughout his service, Dr. Williams has brought authority and passion to the Academy's patient-centered approach to healthcare legislation and policy. As a result, Dr. Williams is sought after by federal officials for his ability to explain how policies affect the patient-physician relationship and pathways to care.

In 2018, he testified before the U.S. House of Representatives' Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee about ophthalmology's critical need to access compounded treatments. The government dropped its controversial policy, in part due to Dr. Williams' testimony. He regularly leads meetings with Medicare's highest-ranking policymakers to discuss reimbursement and regulatory issues.

"The future of ophthalmology has never been more promising or challenging," said Dr. Williams. "As health care consumers an increasing proportion of our economy, there is consensus that new models of health care delivery are required for a transition to value-based care. While everyone agrees with this principle, the devil is in the details. I will continue to do all that I can to ensure new proposals are patient-centered and medically sound."

Dr. Williams is Department of Ophthalmology chair and director of the Beaumont Eye Institute at Beaumont Health in Royal Oak, Michigan. He is also professor and Chair of Ophthalmology at Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine and a partner with Associated Retinal Consultants. Dr. Williams has published more than 250 articles and book chapters in the field of vitreoretinal surgery. He has participated as principal investigator or co-investigator in more than 20 clinical trials sponsored by the National Eye Institute and industry.

He is a recipient of the Academy's Special Recognition Award, the Secretariat Award, and the Lifetime Achievement Award. An Alpha Omega Alpha graduate of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, he completed his ophthalmology residency and fellowship in vitreoretinal surgery at the Eye Institute of the Medical College of Wisconsin.