

The Importance of Accreditation “Of, By, and For Audiology”

By James W. Hall III

The American Academy of Audiology was founded on the assumption that audiology needed an independent professional organization or, as Academy founder and first Academy president James Jerger famously stated: an organization “of, by, and for audiology.”

Creating a Professional Organization

Soon after the Academy was formed in 1988, early leaders established a variety of organizational entities essential for any independent health profession. The creation of the publication *Audiology Today* fulfilled the need for a forum for regular communication among members. Later, a website (audiology.org) augmented communication and offered easy access for members and the public to important and timely audiology information, including a membership directory and clinical practice guidelines.

Like other health professionals, audiologists and hearing scientists require a vehicle for the publication of peer-reviewed papers and the dissemination of original research findings. The *Journal of the American Academy of Audiology (JAAA)* was created in 1989 to meet that vital professional need. The new organization even opened an “audiology store” with a diverse inventory of items, from colorful diagrams of the ear and audiograms of familiar sounds to educational brochures and Academy clothing, coffee cups, and water bottles.



Within two years after the Academy began, the Board of Directors founded the independent nonprofit American Academy of Audiology Foundation (AAAF) to “promote philanthropy in support of public awareness, research, and education in audiology and hearing and balance sciences.”

The autonomous American Board of Audiology (ABA) was created in 1998, a decade after the beginning of the Academy. The ABA “...creates, administers, and promotes rigorous credentialing programs that elevate professional practice and advance patient care. ABA credentials are earned by all leading audiologists, respected by other health-care

providers, and trusted by patients.” As part of its work, the ABA conducted a formal and rigorous analysis of clinical practice and launched specialty certification programs in cochlear implants and pediatric audiology, as well as an audiology preceptor and a tinnitus management certificate program.

Academic Program Accreditation

You’ve probably noticed a trend in this summary of important steps in the development and maturation of the Academy—independence, autonomy, and audiology owning the essential elements of the profession. Now we’ll turn our attention to the

TABLE 1. Key features of accreditation organizations and policies for health-care professions.

| FIELD OF STUDY | ACCREDITATION ORGANIZATION(S) | ACADEMIC DEGREE(S) | ACCREDITATION PROGRAM EXCLUSIVE TO PROFESSION |
|----------------------|---|---|--|
| Medicine* | The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) sponsored by the Association of American Medical Colleges and American Medical Association Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation (COCA) | Doctor of medicine (MD) or doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) | Yes. Only LCME accredits medical schools granting the MD and only COCA accredits medical schools granting the DO degree. |
| Dentistry | Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) | Doctor of dental surgery (DDS) or doctor of dental medicine (DDM) | Yes. Accreditation is only for dental academic programs. |
| Optometry | Accreditation Commission on Optometric Education (ACOE) | Doctor of optometry (OD) | Yes. Accreditation is only for doctor of optometry programs. |
| Physical Therapy | Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) | Doctor of physical therapy (DPT) | Yes. Accreditation is only for doctor of physical therapy programs. |
| Occupational Therapy | Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) | Master's degree in occupational therapy | Yes. Accreditation is only for master's degree programs in occupational therapy. |

* Goal of Accreditation: Professional competence and proficient medical care.

accreditation of academic programs responsible for educating health-care professionals.

TABLE 1 summarizes some key features of accreditation of the academic programs for several health professions. Information in the table leads to three general conclusions:

1. For each of the presented health professions, a single accreditation body is responsible for assuring academic standards for the students enrolled in education leading to the degree required for clinical practice.
2. None of the professions presented share an accreditation body. For example, a separate and independent commission is responsible for the accreditation of academic programs for physical therapy and for occupational therapy.

With one exception, the listed accreditation bodies define standards for doctoral-level academic programs.

The single exception, the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, defines standards for master's degree programs for occupational therapists.



No accreditation body is responsible both for the accreditation of health professionals who practice with a master's degree and those who practice with a doctoral-level degree.

This brief review highlights the importance of audiologists "owning" all of the essential components of the profession of audiology, including the accreditation of academic programs with rigorous standards that reflect the knowledge and skills necessary for the practice of audiology today and in the years to come.

The accreditation of doctor of audiology programs must assure that "recipients of the degree in audiology (AuD)...have sound knowledge, diagnostic, treatment, communication, and professional skills, including management and business acumen in order to function as autonomous direct care providers" (ACAE Standards,

page 3). The Accreditation Commission for Audiology Education (ACAE) meets these rigorous requirements. ^{AT}

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