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Vision Health Month 2019 is well under way as I write this editorial. The cold wet weather of this dismal spring is finally departing and the grass is turning green and lush. It's not too early for us to remind our patients that the return of sunny skies and warm temperatures is a cue to protect their eyes and skin from the sun with sunglasses, hats and sunblock. The ophthalmic and contact lens manufacturers have developed a wide assortment of UV-blocking products that will meet the visual and sun protection needs of our patients. You can expect to see quite a lot of them at the CAO Congress in Victoria this July.

The peer-reviewed articles in this issue discuss three of the many sight-threatening conditions that we may encounter in our practices: giant cell arteritis, central serous chorioretinopathy and squamous cell carcinoma. All require timely diagnosis and appropriate management. Our authors point out that in giant cell arteritis and squamous cell carcinoma, optometrists have to consider not only what is happening to the patient's eyes but also the potential systemic effects. Involving other health care providers becomes another important aspect of case management, especially when delayed care can be life altering if not life threatening.

With the recent news about cutbacks at almost all levels of government services, including health care delivery, timely care is certainly a major challenge. The news that the government of Ontario is considering the expansion of the scope of practice of optometry may alleviate some of the roadblocks eventually, if it ever comes to pass, but that does not address the immediate problems of accessibility across the country. And implementation of such a change will greatly impact existing practitioners who have to upgrade their skills as well as students having even more requirements added to an already packed curriculum and knowledge base. What will be lost to make room? How will these changes affect the way optometry is practiced? How will practitioners be paid appropriately to deliver these new services?

Canadian optometry has evolved greatly in the 40 years since I received my licence to practice optometry. Technological advances, expanded clinical skills and the resulting regulatory changes will spur further changes to the profession. The challenge for present and future leadership will be to ensure that the health care system can afford them. ●