

MORE ON OPTOMETRY A PRIMARY HEALTH DISCIPLINE

In a previous discussion we outlined the responsibilities of the optometrist as a primary health care provider.⁽¹⁾ It was pointed out that the optometrist's fundamental contribution was in the enhancement and protection of vision in humans and the treatment by optical means and/or rehabilitation of any deficiencies found.

However, as primary health care practitioners, optometrists cannot limit their services solely to problems of refraction and binocularity. From the turn of the century optometrists have employed the ophthalmoscope to examine the interior of the eye. Optometry has accepted the responsibilities of its role in the care of the health of patients. This aspect of practice has been improved and its importance emphasized over the years. The training program in pathology detection, physiology and pharmacology is now so sophisticated that optometrists tend to overlook some of the basic optics concepts taught them in

their undergraduate years.

Ophthalmoscopy has been part of optometric practice since its formative years. Its importance cannot be overemphasized. Expressing its importance in simple language is not always an easy task. The following description by Jones and Newcomb⁽²⁾ is concise and brings out what can be accomplished by a careful ophthalmoscopy:

"It is surprising that so few lay people realize the human eye is a sensory end organ which is in direct contact with the body's central nervous and circulatory systems. The eye is the only place in the body where nervous tissue and blood vessels can be examined *in vivo* without exploratory surgery.

As such, every eye exam is actually a "mini" health exam. The instruments necessary for this examination are non-threatening and relatively inexpensive, and in the hands of a skilled clinician can provide a wealth of information

about ocular as well as systemic health problems. For example, in the course of a basic optometric examination half of the cranial nerves are routinely tested (optic, oculomotor, trochlear, ophthalmic division of the trigeminal, abducens and facial) while others may be probed, if indicated, by non-invasive techniques designed to elicit responses of smelling, hearing, chewing, swallowing, speaking and contracting the neck muscles. The eye is truly a microcosm for the study of systemic disease affecting man, and as such, periodic optometric examinations would be indicated for children even in the absence of highly prevalent visual disorders.

This information, in addition to that pertaining to specific visual disorders and recommended intervals of appointments must be placed in the hands of parents to

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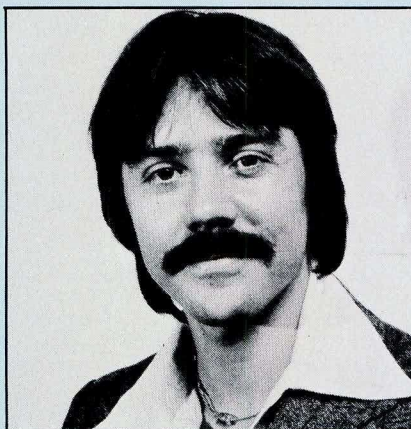
TOM LITTLE IS LEAVING!

Some 18 months ago the *Canadian Journal of Optometry* took on a new look. It expanded in size and content and its new presentation and appearance were, to say the least, revolutionary. The management was the recipient of congratulations and felicitations; only favourable comments were to be heard for the journal's transformation.

The expanded journal, in size and content, may have definite technical and academic advantages over its previous format but its attractive presentation has been the main reason that the "new look journal" has been so enthusiastically accepted.

The editor acknowledges all the letters of praise which have been received but wishes to recognize that

the new look has not been his doing. It is to Tom Little, Business and Advertising Manager, to whom all credit is due for the attractive and appealing appearance of the journal. Tom, a graduate in journalism



from Carleton University in Ottawa, has been the guiding light in the transformation. Not only has he assumed the mechanical production of the publication but he has innovated and designed most of the physical changes in the book.

It is therefore with deep regret that we accept Tom's resignation as he heads back to his native British Columbia. The editor, staff, and management thank him for his excellent work with the *Canadian Journal* and wish him well. With talents such as he has displayed with us he cannot but succeed in his new environment.

A sad good-bye and God speed him on his way!

G.M.B.

assure their children of having timely optometric care."

Although the quotation relates to child care, the need for ophthalmoscopy and assessment of oculomotor function and reflexes does not depend upon the age of the patient. In fact, the need for ocular examination increases with age. These procedures have been taught to optometrists from the very beginnings; with the first didactic courses

organised by a few far-sighted physicians and refracting-opticians nearly 100 years ago. The first formal colleges of optometry developed from these modest beginnings.⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾

No eye examination can be qualified as complete if such procedures are omitted. Simply by carrying out a routine optometric examination the optometrist fully justifies his claim to be a primary health care practitioner.

G.M.B.

References

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Report From the Auxiliary to the Ontario Association of Optometrists

As my term of office as President of the Auxiliary to the Ontario Association of Optometrists draws to a close, may I address a plea to all optometrists.

Our most important job is that we share a common interest and a common goal to advance the profession of optometry and to serve as a medium by which information about vision reaches the public.

Please, may we have more support from the CAO and the OAO? We do need it. Although we have worked hard and long the Ontario Auxiliary numbers only 133 when there are 650 registered optometrists in Ontario. It does seem there is support needed.

Nevertheless, with only 133 members and about 30 very active members we have done the following:

- established a yearly scholarship to the School of Optometry at Waterloo as it was needed,
- donated \$1,000 grants for summer projects for the School of Optometry,
- presented a grant to Dr. M. Samek four years ago in the amount of \$3,800 from our Vision Research Fund for a project in low-field vision,
- at present, we have \$1,500 in the student-loan fund at the School at Waterloo for the use of any student whether they are in optometry or not, furthering the work of optometry,

- sponsored the "Joy of Seeing" Art Contest in two areas in the elementary schools which reached thousands of children. This included setting up displays in various malls for one to two weeks, plus appearing on CHCH-TV which was seen all over Ontario,
- provided and will continue to provide large print books for libraries. These are expensive and badly needed. Most of our districts now do this,
- provided and distributed hundreds of pamphlets into schools, day nurseries, etc.,
- sold 10,602 copies of the Susan and Sam vision care activity book across Canada. Imperial Optical is now promoting this project both inside and outside Canada, which is certainly taking the word of optometry out into the public domain,
- at Congress are always available to assist in any way possible. At the March Congress in Toronto, the Auxiliary provides a suite to foster friendship and good fellowship,
- presented five life memberships (over 40 years active service in the Ontario Auxiliary) and twenty 25 years awards.

Just think what the Auxiliary could do with an increased and active membership. We do understand some areas are too small to sponsor

a local Auxiliary but we need their membership of \$10.00. Of this \$5.00 is kept in the local Ontario district for any use they wish, \$1.00 is sent on to the Vision Research Fund, and \$4.00 is kept for operating costs.

We have heard that other parts of Canada are interested in forming their own Auxiliary and I know the Ontario executive would be only too happy to assist in any way possible.

I have been on the executive for over thirty years in some capacity or other. It is time for the "Young" group to take over. I am sure they will have plenty of exciting ideas. The Auxiliary works both ways. If a spouse is interested, they in turn keep the optometrist active. I enjoyed writing the Susan and Sam book and hope that I have contributed to optometry.

We still need YOU, the optometrist, to back us. We need YOU to be interested in what we do, and realize we can be of some use, for the good of optometry.

Thank you for the opportunity of addressing you.

Yours in optometry.

**Patricia Clay Thomson,
President,
Auxiliary to the Ontario
Association of Optometrists.**