



The Ontario Association of Optometrists Report



The Ontario Association has undergone a series of major changes and has witnessed continued growth in many areas throughout the seventies.

At the beginning of the decade there were 360 members out of the 503 optometrists practicing in Ontario for a 71.5% membership rate, and at the end of the decade there were 568 of the just-over 600 practicing optometrists for a 92.5% membership rate. In addition, all but two of the school faculty and a number of out of province practitioners have kept up their membership in the OAO.

Our name was changed to the Ontario Association of Optometrists from the former cumbersome Optometrical Association of Ontario. This was felt to be particularly appropriate since the operative word in the mind of the public is OPTOMETRIST.

In terms of finance our yearly operating budget of \$50,000 in 1970 rose to \$150,000 in 1979.

We are pleased to note that our Congress attendance has almost tripled from 130 optometrists in 1970 to the 1980 total of over 375 members.

With respect to payment for services the previous decade saw a \$7 examination fee with a \$15 dispensing fee. In the early '70s this became \$15 and \$10. On-going negotiations produced a more uniform fee for service approach with OHIP paying a fee on a negotiated basis. In 1980 the fee OHIP pays is \$19.50 for an examination, \$13.90 for a reassessment and \$8.30 for a partial assessment.

Other significant advancements included the addition of a second optometrist to the Advisory Board of the Dispensing Optician course at Georgian College. Also, a board of optometrists representing the School, College and Association

now plays an advisory role to the optometrical secretarial course at Conestoga College.

Moving into a Group Insurance Program, we changed from a small group insurance life policy underwriter to a major company and brought in a program of greater protection for coverage, for alleged malpractice cases, as well as protection for families through income protection, office overhead costs while ill and term life insurance.

These have continued to be updated with both improvements in cost and service and in increased benefits when surpluses accumulate. Another major accomplishment was the development of a handbook which was replaced by the Policy manual. This was in keeping with the goal of establishing a more uniform approach for all practitioners in offering their various services to the public.

In another move the Maybee Memorial Fund which was developed in the previous two decades to assist veterans and other needy students was turned over to the School of Optometry for scholarship purposes.

The Information, Library and Assistance Centre, a new service to members and the public went through its development stage in the '70s.

In an effort to improve interprofessional relations, the OAO Newsletter was developed as an informal means of disseminating information originated by members, the board of directors, or from the School and/or the College. It became a means for exchanging information and encouraging members to present papers and comments both on an informal basis and as scientific papers. New sections for assistants, auxiliaries and students have also been added as required.

In the area of systems development, our representatives assisted in

developing patient reporting cards, invoicing and recording as well as offering assistance in developing the use of computers for improved office-patient services.

Continuing education, always a concern of associations, resulted in the development of a very strong committee which maintained an ongoing dialogue with the College to ensure that realistic attitudes would prevail. The College has encouraged the Association to take the responsibility for administering approved programs which qualify under the College Regulations of the Health Disciplines Act.

In terms of its organization, the OAO organization and committee structure has gone through two major changes in order to keep up with the changing times, changing needs and the interests of the members.

During this period the new name "Auxiliary to the OAO" changed from "Women's Auxiliary" and a new province-wide rather than the previous Toronto only organization appeared. New avenues were opened in the public relations field, all of which contributed to the good of optometry.

Mid-way through the decade, when the College of Optometrists took on a more aggressive role toward the responsibility of meeting the "public interest," the Association accepted the need to be stronger as a combined force to represent the membership in every sense, and the addition of Mr. Bill Maxwell as legal counsel was initiated. This segregation of role responsibilities followed the pattern of the other major health disciplines in recognizing the need for independent leadership to be given by the elected delegates.

A new outlook every few years was established by the assembly to participate in group dialogue ses-

sions in order to see where the profession is going in relation to its desired future, updating programs as planned or when the need arises.

Mid-way through the decade we were able to convince the Department of Veterans Affairs Treatment Services that its previous attitude toward veterans was not in keeping with entitlements of veterans. It was also recognized that Optometric services were a provincial matter and the previous Canadian agreement was not acceptable. It paid \$6.00 for fitting and \$10 for an examination.

Consequently, an agreement for members only was signed for 90% of our fee schedule to be automatically charged and accepted whenever our annual meeting by vote changed the fee schedule.

The previous "ophthalmologists whenever possible" attitude was replaced with "vision practitioner of choice" and it was also agreed that the recommendation of the optometrist using professional judgment would be the criteria for the lenses and frames, with the right of the veteran insured whereby that person could, if desired, choose a frame in excess of \$10 and pay the difference.

New negotiations during this decade resulted in a recognition for accepting the Indian patient as a citizen and not a welfare case. This means recognizing our fee schedule whether the native patient pays or whether the government pays for professional services performed.

Talks with the Workmens Compensation Board brought about our

policy to deal with the patient directly as a more acceptable manner of meeting that patient's needs at the time of his accident. The responsibility for payment now rests between the practitioner and the patient and the responsibility relating to the accident remains between the patient, the employer and the WCB.

A number of practitioners have become active in their district CNIB chapters but the Ontario Division still refuses to recognize the existence of an optometrist for participating services.

In motorist vision, a decisive role was played by optometry with clinics and seminars held throughout the province at which optometrists lectured to the driver examiners and driver teachers.

During the '70s there were six conferences dealing with "Co-operation in the Provision of Health Services" at which the optometric viewpoint was well represented.

A new emphasis was placed on the need for closer liaison with other associations and practitioners which has developed on an ongoing sharing basis. This applied to not only improved interprofessional relations with medicine, but also with others interested in vision care such as nurses, opticians, pharmacists, health workers, teachers and health clinics.

Ongoing meetings are now held with the Ontario Association of Nurses, the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario Dental Association and the Ontario College of Family Practice. Periodic meetings

are held with opticians, ophthalmologists, public health, and other associations and agencies associated in the health care field.

Finally after years of planning the last part of the decade saw positive action which resulted in the formal establishment of the optometric Centre.

A commitment in support of the Centre has now been made by three groups—Association, College and School for action, finance and manpower.

An ongoing public relations program materialized during this decade which included two large donations made to the CAO to contract from P.R. spots for Ontario TV.

News releases prepared in the office in recent years have maintained a steady usage and contact source for newspaper stories and TV interviews.

In addition our direct public contact through releases to schools, teachers, and school boards in addition to the public (through inquiries and clinics) has increased public awareness of both the optometrist and a need for optometric exams.

More recently the CAO P.R. program has been integrated into the OAO program for a better overall coverage.

To assist in accomplishing all of these advances, costs were shared by all from dues of \$175 in 1970 to \$275 through 1979, and so when asked "What does your association do for us?" the answer now is "And what do you do for your association?"

Mr. Cal Peppler
OAO Executive Director

1981: International Year of Disabled Persons

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons. The theme for the year is "Full Participation and Equality." The year will promote the enjoyment by disabled persons of rights and opportunities which are available to other persons in society.

The official logo to be used in connection with the year of disabled

persons (IYDP) represents two people holding hands in solidarity reflecting equality, hope and support. The leaves around the logo show a part of the United Nations emblem.

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