

# VISION MATTERS



Protecting & Enhancing Your Eyesight is the Job of Opticians

## FEATURE ARTICLE

### Who's the Boss?

A patient arrives at your dispensing station requesting new eyeglasses, you spend considerable time discussing the needs of the client and eventually you determine the type of frames, lenses, index of refraction, tint, material and a number of other variables. The lenses are made to prescription obtained from the physician or optometrist and delivered to the patient. Some weeks later the patient returns to your office either with a note from an optometrist or physician instructing you to make changes to the lenses you designed. What is your obligation to make changes?

You *are* required to make changes in the prescription. However, you are not required to make the changes free of charge. That is a business decision of your own. No other professional can obligate you to pay the cost of an error in the original prescription. If there is a responsibility for costs in this situation it belongs to the prescriber not the optician. If you choose to make prescription changes and not charge your patient that is your choice.

You *are not* required to make changes to specifications of the lenses that are not prescription related. The decisions that you make in consultation with your patient cannot be overruled by another professional. If your patient comes in with a note that informs you that in the opinion of the prescriber, you should change the lenses to some other form, you would be wise to consider those changes but you are not obligated to do so.

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Opticians, physicians and optometrists share an overlapping scope of practice. Overlapping scopes of practice acknowledge that more than one regulated professional is qualified to provide the health care service. Overlapping scopes of practice do not create a seniority of one profession over another; all are equal and are qualified to make the decisions required to provide health care services to patients. This means that a physician or an optometrist cannot overrule your treatment anymore than you can overrule theirs.

So who's the Boss? **You are** – respect the input of other professionals but remember that **you** are in charge of your patients care.

## FROM THE BOARD ROOM

### 2008 Election Results

Board elections always prompt an increased traffic of activity at the College office. A record-breaking number of eight candidates from the Lower Mainland (District 1) put their names forward for election to the Board of College of Opticians in the fall elections. It was refreshing to see so many opticians interested in taking a leadership role in their profession and willing to serve the public interest.

For the entire month of December 2008, election ballots slowly trickled their way into the College mail box. By January 1, 2009, a total of 278 electors voted out of 826 registrants eligible to vote in the Lower Mainland district. Raheem Savja and Dieter Saxer were the successful candidates.

### Retiring Board Members

The Board wishes to thank **Inderjit Bamrah** and **David Nelson** for the dedicated service to the opticians' community and the College of Opticians. Both Mr. Bamrah and Nelson are

senior members of the Opticians community; their commitment and experience provided a valuable contribution to the College.

Mr. Bamrah was born in Kenya and received his optician education from the City College in London, England. For many years he operated a successful practice in London. In the early 1990's he decided to bring his family to Vancouver, BC. Mr. Bamrah lectured at national opticians conventions and has a lifetime interest in teaching Opticianry. He has served as a volunteer with various Opticianry associations. He is deeply respected by his colleagues. He continues to practise in Surrey.

Mr. Nelson, a Canadian born and educated optician, has recently retired from the field after over 25 years of practise. Mr. Nelson, a specialist in low vision and contact lenses added to his impressive skills by certifying as a refracting optician. The community acknowledges the tremendous amount of time and work that Mr. Nelson contributed to his profession.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

### Upcoming MCE Opportunity

Your local professional association, The OBC: Opticians of British Columbia, is pleased to inform the College of an Education Day planned at the Executive Airport Plaza Hotel in Richmond on **Sunday, March 22, 2009**. The full day programs will be a great learning opportunity with interesting topics relevant to your practice such as, "Showing Your Clients You Care." This event will be the last opportunity for updating your continuing education requirements before the registration renewal deadline. Details of this spring event can be found on the OBC Web site at [www.opticians.bc.ca](http://www.opticians.bc.ca)

### Scrambling for Credits?

You just got your registration renewal in the mail and noticed on the form a highlighted box reminding you that your continuing education (CE) credits are past due and that your registration renewal will not be processed until you submit our CE credits. If that wasn't enough, your renewal is due in less than a month on March 31, 2009 and you

are still missing 10 credits. You panic, you scramble, and you're tight on cash. What do you do?

Find other ways to complete your CE requirements without having to attend live seminars! Here are six easy ways to obtain CE credits:

1) **Self-Study Club** - You can do this by yourself but it's definitely more fun with fellow opticians over coffee. Brainstorm a topic relating to opticianry to research, go online and search up fact sheets and articles, read about your topic, have a discussion and then summarize what you've learned in a few paragraphs. You'll either receive credits based on the number of pages you've read or one credit per hour of discussion. Best of all, self-study club sessions are free.

2) **Volunteer Work** - if you've gone on a national or international vision mission, submit proof for 3 credits per week. You can also volunteer your opticianry skills

around your neighbor and obtains credits (for example, spending a couple hours weekly at a seniors home).

3) **Become active in Opticianry**- contact your Opticianry associations or the College and discover how you become active in the Opticianry community while obtaining some credits.

4) **University/College/Continuing Education Studies** - did you complete any courses lately? Submit the course outline to apply for credits.

5) **Opticianry Education Development, Supervision and Publishing** - are you an experienced optician? Develop your own continuing education course and share your expertise with other opticians. You can also supervise student opticians, and publish an article on Opticianry.

6) **On-line/Distance Learning Courses** - if you want to save some time in exchange for a nominal fee, contact the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC) and inquire about their online and distance delivery module options.

## Calendar of Events Continuing Education Events

- OBC: Opticians of British Columbia Education Day: Sunday, March 22, 2009 at the Executive Airport Plaza Hotel, Richmond, BC
- OBC: Opticians of British Columbia Education Day: Oct 1 - Nov 1, 2009 at the Delta Burnaby Hotel, Burnaby, BC

## COBC Board Meetings

- Sunday, April 5, 2009
- Sunday, June 7, 2009
- COBC AGM: Sunday, Nov 1, 2009

## Deadlines

- **Registration Renewals: March 31, 2009.** After this date, a late charge will apply (**NOTE:** if your MCE credits and/or Criminal Record Re-check are past due, you cannot renew your registration until these documents are submitted).



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## FEATURE ARTICLE

### What Does the College Actually Do?

That's a good question! The reality is that even though opticians have a lifelong relationship with the College, most opticians only interrelate with the College once or twice a year at most - once for your continuing education requirements and once for your registration renewal. Usually both of these occasions create some grumbling from registrants of the College and prompts the question, “what does the College actually do?” Mostly the work of the College focusses on “standards of care and accountability.” That is an impressive sounding phrase, but what does it really mean?

A “standard of care” is something that you apply to all your patients. Opticians are highly trained health professionals that have a good reputation with the public of British Columbia. In fact, a recent Ipsos Reid survey conducted for the Opticians Association of Canada found that British Columbians have a positive attitude towards opticians:

- BC Opticians are seen as being highly trained and knowledgeable.

- The vast majority placed a high rating on the value of the services that BC Opticians provide.

While you may take your skills for granted, you may wish to reflect how you came to know so much. Many of you voluntarily completed a program through the Canadian Guild of Opticians, while others completed programs required by the College through either Douglas College, NAIT/OAC or BC College of Optics. Each of these programs have a commonality - the curricula was designed on standards set by the COBC. The College carefully identifies the competencies an optician must have to provide care to the public of BC. The College then ensures that you are able to deliver those services. In doing so, the COBC meets regularly with the teaching institutions and conducts in-depth reviews of the optician programs. Also, to check that training colleges are doing their jobs well, the COBC conducts examinations. So in reality, by the time you are newly registered as an “optician” in BC, you have been under supervision of the COBC for about two or three years. In fact for most people at the completion of the registration and examinations, the job of the COBC is about 50% complete.

The next important interface to maintain a high standard of care is the continuing education (CE) requirement of the Government of BC. Once again, the work of the College is often silent and behind the scenes. Although members demonstrate to the College they have met the requirements, this is usually the easy part for the administration. The hard part is working with the education providers to ensure that adequate CE programs are available and ensuring that the CE programs meet College standards. The Quality Assurance Committee work long hours to ensure that these programs are constantly improved.

That just leaves the explanation of “accountability.” Rightfully, only a small portion of the College's time is taken up with complaints (accountability). Opticians maintain a high standard of care because of the excellent training they have received. Complaints should be and are the exception rather than the rule. The next newsletter will focus on this important and necessary process that ensures high standards of care are available to the public.