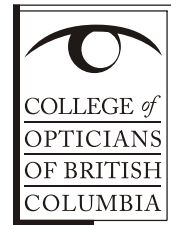


January 2007

# vision matters

Highlights of the Board ~ College of Opticians of British Columbia



## BOARD UPDATES

### Excellent Candidates Ran in the Elections

The polls were open in November and December 2006 for the COBC general election to elect a new Board representative for District 5. For the first time, there were four highly qualified candidates running for one open seat on the Board. COBC thanks all registrants who cast their ballot and voted: there was good support for all four candidates and it was a close election.

### Higher Participation by Registrants is Encouraged

While it was encouraging to see so many interested in being part of the Board, COBC noticed that only 25% of registrants sent in their vote for this last election.

Opticianry in BC is a self-regulated health profession, meaning that opticians elect representatives among themselves to the Board. Since the profession is directed by opticians in the public interest, COBC urges registrants to have their voices heard by participating in COBC activities.

### New Board Members

COBC congratulates John Kerns as the District 3 (Okanagan/Kootenays) representative by acclamation, and Lutz Sprecher as the District 5 (Contact Lens Fitter) representative. Both Mr. Kerns and Mr. Sprecher will begin their 3-year term on the Board starting January 1, 2007.

COBC looks forward to working together in 2007 to ensure safe and effective vision care for the BC public.

## WORKING WITH THE PROFESSION

### COBC Values Cooperation

Many registrants have phoned to ask why the Board is reluctant to reply to deliberately misleading and provocative statements by some critics. The Board has long believed that the public interest is best served when the COBC, Opticianry schools and associations work together. So, COBC focuses on cooperation and we are proud to recognize a year of exceptional partnership with BC Opticianry's respected stakeholders.

### Continuing Education Programs Attract Praise at the Annual General Meeting

COBC hosted a lively Annual General Meeting and Continuing Education day in November 2006.

The Continuing Education portion of the day was expertly put on by OBC-Opticians of British Columbia, who organized excellent lectures and workshops in cooperation with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Douglas College, BC College of Optics and the Opticians Association of Canada.

The Board is especially delighted that BC opticians themselves have volunteered to present lectures and workshops on their specializations.

### Examinations are Successful Thanks to Cooperation

The Registration Examinations would be not possible without the cooperation between Douglas College, BC College of Optics, NACO and COBC.

In November 2006, COBC held the

largest set of NACO exams to date: over 2 days, more than 100 candidates sat the exams.

COBC thanks the schools for providing excellent facilities and equipment for the exams. Also, COBC thanks the 22 registrants who assisted as examiners and the COBC Examination Coordinators, Debra Szteina and Raj Mann.

## NO FEE INCREASE FOR 2007

### BC Has Lowest Registration Fees in Canada

Registration fees in 2007 will not be increased and this is the sixth year in a row that fees have not changed.

BC opticians continue to have the lowest registration fees among opticians across Canada.

## COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

### Vision Screening Programs Have the Public Interest in Mind

OBC-Opticians of British Columbia has organized innovative Continuing Education programs that educate the general public on the importance of eye health.

Over 250 BC opticians have been trained in these large-scale vision screening programs in 2006. Many are putting this education into practice by hosting neighborhood eye care events that are designed to focus awareness on eye health.

COBC is delighted that these programs are designed to benefit the public. COBC also applauds the fact that these training programs were held across the province, including Prince George, Kamloops and Kelowna.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

### Group 3 Credits are Due

COBC thanks all Group 3 registrants who have submitted their MCE credits by December 2006 deadline. Those who have missed the deadline are urged to submit their MCE credits to COBC as soon as possible so that they can renew their registration in March 2007.

### Appreciation for MCE Achievers

COBC is pleased that most registrants so far have completed more than the required number of MCE credits and we applaud the many opticians who have far exceeded the requirements. Special recognition goes to several opticians who exceeded 60 credits and the single registrant with over 70 credits.

### Study Clubs are Free and Flexible

Self-study clubs are a cost-free and interactive way to complete MCEs according to each registrant's schedule. The QA Committee is pleased to recognize the increasing number of registrants who plan their own education programs. Please visit [www.cobc.ca/study\\_clubs.htm](http://www.cobc.ca/study_clubs.htm) for more information.

### MCE Multiplier Awards Advanced Courses

To encourage meaningful education opportunities, the Quality Assurance Committee created a new reward system to recognize advanced Continuing Education:

- Simple product knowledge courses are awarded with the base credit (1 credit per hour).
- Courses that further basic education will receive double the credits (2 credits per hour).
- Courses on subjects recommended by the Board as necessary to train opticians to meet future ophthalmic trends and public needs will attract three times the credits (3 credits per hour).

Vision screening, automated refraction and low vision aids are

recommended by the Board as important skills for the future. Courses on these topics will attract the maximum credits.

Please visit [www.cobc.ca](http://www.cobc.ca) for the full-text QA policy on Mandatory Continuing Education.

## AUTOMATED REFRACTION

### Bylaw Amendments are in Effect

The Board approved the changes to the COBC Bylaws on automated refractions back in August 2006. These changes have been deposited according to the requirements of the *Health Professions Act* and have been in effect since August 25, 2006.

### Summary of Bylaw Amendments

- 1) All opticians who are conducting automated refractions must notify COBC by submitting the *Notification of Use of Automated Refraction Equipment* form.
- 2) Before opticians begin the automated refraction process, all opticians must provide the *Client Notice* pamphlet to educate each potential automated refraction client and obtain their signature.
- 3) By October 1, 2007, all opticians who conduct automated refractions must be certified by the COBC. This means the completion of an approved Automated Refraction course and passing an approved Certification Examination.

### Grandfathering Automated Refraction Opticians

The Board has approved the grandfathering of existing opticians who conduct automated refractions as Automated Refraction Opticians.

Grandfathering exempts these opticians from the Certification Examination only. They will still need to successfully complete an approved Automated Refraction program by October 1, 2007.

All opticians who have already submitted the *Notification of Use*

form since October 2006 and have completed an appropriate course have been automatically grandfathered.

## PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

### Reminder to Submit Proof of Insurance to COBC

COBC reminds all practicing registrants to submit proof of their professional liability insurance. This can be a certificate of insurance or a letter issued by the insurance broker. Policies must be sent directly to COBC by the registrant, the employer or the insurance broker.

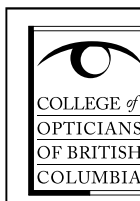
The policy must contain:

- Name of the Insurer
- Registrant's name
- Expiration date of the policy
- Insurance liability of at least \$1,000,000 per occurrence

The Board added these reporting safeguards to protect registrants and the public. This is in response to previous mishandling of insurance applications by the DOABC.

In 2005, COBC had identified significant errors in DOABC insurance policies, where members paid premiums to the DOABC but the payments were not forwarded to the insurance broker for some 2004 and some 2005 policies until COBC corrected the situation. This error meant that some registrants were in fact not covered by any insurance.

This issue came to COBC's attention when two members had liability claims directed at them in 2005. COBC resolved this issue and corrected the discrepancies. The current reporting process will prevent future difficulties.



COBC is committed to open communications and access with registrants and the public. For the most current updates and information about the Board and COBC, please visit [www.cobc.ca](http://www.cobc.ca).