

# VISION MATTERS

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Quality Assurance	2
Your Questions Answered	2
A Closer Look	3
In the News	3
Career Oppourtunities	4

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

March 31 to April 2, 2006  
**Vision Canada West 2006**  
 Sheraton Vancouver  
 Wall Centre  
 Vancouver, BC CANADA

For information visit:  
[www.vision-canada.ca](http://www.vision-canada.ca)

March 19th, 2006  
**Mandatory Continuing Education Event**  
 Prince George  
 Ramada Hotel Downtown  
 For information visit:  
[www.doabc.com](http://www.doabc.com)

Information on online and distance education oppourtunities can be found at [www.opticians.ca](http://www.opticians.ca)



**Professor Mo Jalie, Lecturer at the AGM Education Series**

## YOU SPOKE, WE LISTENED, ON MCE

The over 400 opticians who attended the College of Opticians of BC's Annual General Meeting allowed for a frank and full consultation on the COBC's Mandatory Continuing Education (MCE) program.

This session was so successful that roundtable consultations will become a regular feature at the AGM. It has proven to be an effective way of establishing a productive dialogue between registrants and the COBC board and staff. In this instance, the consultation process has led to immediate changes in the way MCE is delivered.

The consultation was an opportunity for registrants to provide feed-

back, ask questions and make suggestions on MCE. Participants were grouped into round tables (as opposed to rows) to maximize conversation during the sessions.

Topics of discussions included:

- *How do we ensure the quality of MCE sessions offered?*
- *What subject matters should be included?*
- *How are credits assigned and weighted for different events?*
- *Looking to the future, what topics should be planned?*



**Consultation with Registrants at AGM**

The roundtable discussions were facilitated by the Opticians of Manitoba, and modeled after a successful initiative in that province. Key concerns raised included the need for high quality programming, maximizing technology to deliver the programs, and ensuring the focus for everyone participating in MCE was quality education, not credits.

*Continued Page 4*

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR:

### OPTICIANS MAKE AGM BEST EVER

It was a pleasure to meet so many of you this past October at the College of Optician's Annual General Meeting. 420 opticians turned out for the event, which sets an important new record for participation. The 2004 meeting had 120 opticians in attendance, and the 2003 meeting had only 7.

A number of you said your interest was sparked by two things: a no-charge lecture series that included Professor Mo Jalie of England, an internationally recognized expert on lens design and ophthalmic optics; and, a chance to provide input on the future of our Continuing Education program. The

overview of the consultation, and the results, are included in this publication for your review. We all share the goal of providing the public with the highest quality of service, and it is an honour to work with you to this end. Happy holidays!  
*Dave Martens, Chair  
 College of Opticians of BC*

*It is important for opticians to understand the COBC's quality assurance efforts, so BC consumers receive the best vision care possible.*



## QUALITY ASSURANCE: WHY IT MATTERS

The College of Opticians of BC engages in a number of activities aimed at ensuring BC consumers receive the best vision care possible. Chief among these is the concept of quality assurance. It is important for registrants to understand this core function of the COBC, and how it relates to their career and practice.



Quality assurance starts by setting standards for entry to the profession, and continues through to monitoring practice, and responding to public concerns.

In each of these areas, the COBC works to ensure that it sets high standards, and works to communicate those standards to registrants, and maintain the standards in the practice of opticianry.

The first stage of quality assurance is restricting entry to the profession. While trying to avoid 'credential creep', (a phrase used to describe the trend in some professions to gradually increase the amount of specialized education required to gain entry), the COBC needs to ensure that those becoming opticians meet a number of base criteria. Activities in this area include reviewing and approving opticians training courses, as well as reviewing and approving suitable examinations.

In terms of practice, the COBC maintains its standards by communicating its core *Standards of Practice for Registrants*, and providing advice on best practices for registrants. Further, the COBC provides tools such as Self-Assessments and the Mandatory Continuing Education programs. Regular practice inspections of opticians' workplaces are also carried out.



The needs and interests of consumers are always at the forefront. When it comes to quality assurance, the COBC's activities include providing information to consumers about what they can expect from their optician, as well as providing a process for public concerns to be addressed.

Public inquiries can range from simple questions to serious complaints. The COBC has a similar range of actions available, according to the severity of the problem. The end goal, though, is to ensure every optician is providing a high quality of vision care to British Columbians.

## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

### BC CREDENTIALS IN OTHER PROVINCES?

While the COBC is pondering what could possibly motivate opticians to leave this beautiful province, labour mobility is a question raised by many opticians. How do credentials from BC transfer into other provinces?

In general, practicing registrants with up-to-date MCE requirements are able to register in other provinces at the same level.

There are a few exceptions. Other provinces will not accept non-practicing registrants, and those without valid MCE credits could be required to complete them in their new province. In Ontario, opticians must have both eye glass and contact lens certification. Opticians from BC who do not have contact lens certification but wish to register in Ontario can

do so if they register to upgrade their certification at Seneca College or the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology.

While opticians professional organizations have worked hard to standardize exams and education across the country, there is still no agreement in place with Quebec.

**A CLOSER LOOK:**  
**BRAD BENSON**

You can generally find Brad Benson, very early in the morning, working hard at a career that he is clearly passionate about.

Brad was born in 1953 in the city of Melfort, Saskatchewan. Melfort is known as the "City of Northern Lights" because of the spectacular aurora borealis seen in the night skies for much of the year.

Brad, who has myopia, and has worn glasses all his life, spent his youth growing up in Melfort with his family, who are "myopic like mad", he comments jovially. Soon after he completed high school, he made the move west to British Columbia. In BC, he began work and training for a career in the field of opticianry, a career that he is very proud to talk about.

In 1971, at the age of 17, he began work at an independent London Optical located in Kelowna, BC. This job afforded him the ability to acquire the training required to become an optician; and by 1974, he was accepted as a

Member of the Canadian Guild of Dispensing Opticians.

In 1981, Brad opened Benson Optical Labs Ltd. in Terrace, BC. Benson Optical Labs is a full service shop that is proud to provide complete one-stop service to the community of Terrace. Brad is a very dedicated optician who enjoys the business side of his profession, the challenge of running his own business, and helping his clients on a daily basis. He supports his community outside of his business with an outreach program for First Nations people in Terrace.

Brad is very clearly proud of his profession; he is a Past Chair of the COBC and continues to support the profession by maintaining the website for the COBC. In addition to the maintenance of the website, he is working on some innovative enhancements to handle online credits for MCE, and developing forum sites for the COBC.

Brad Benson cites the best thing about being an optician is the satisfaction he derives from his ability to help people on a daily basis.

Benson Optical Labs Ltd. is located at 4611 Lakelse Avenue in Terrace, BC and can be reached at PO Box 744, Terrace, British Columbia V8G 4C3, Phone: (250) 638-0341.



**BRAD BENSON**  
*Benson Optical Labs Ltd.*

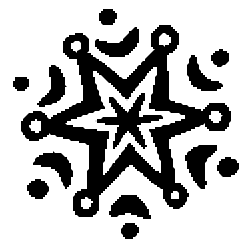
*Brad Benson cites the best thing about being an optician is the satisfaction he derives from his ability to help people on a daily basis.*

**IN THE NEWS:**  
**US REGULATES COSMETIC CONTACT LENSES**

This November, the USA passed a bill that allows their Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to bring legal action against those who sell cosmetic contact lenses without a prescription and fitting from an eye care professional. The move was prompted by eye care professionals, who cited health care implications of ill fitting

contact lenses as the basis for the new legislation, including corneal ulcers, infections, eye injury, and even loss of vision. Decorative contact lenses used to be exempted from FDA oversight as they were classified as "cosmetic items"; they are now reclassified as medical devices, similar to non-cosmetic contact lenses.

Does this set a precedent for Canadian eye care professionals? A number of organizations, including the Opticians Association of Canada and the Canadian Ophthalmological Society, are pressing the case with the organization that regulates Canadian medical devices.



## College of Opticians of British Columbia

**Location:**

420 -2025 West Broadway  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
V6J 1Z6

**Office Hours:**

Monday to Friday  
8 am to 4pm

**Phone:** 604.278.7510

**Fax:** 604.278.7594

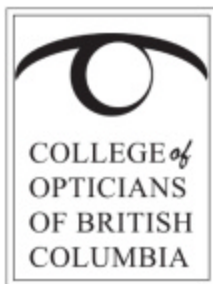
**Toll Free:** 888.771.6755

**Email:** office@cobc.ca

We're on the Web  
<http://www.cobc.ca>



*Remember to let the College know if your address has changed.*



## WHO WE ARE AND HOW TO REACH US

The College of Opticians of British Columbia is the regulatory body established to ensure British Columbia's opticians provide safe and effective optical services. The College of Opticians of British Columbia is committed:

*To ensure British Columbia opticians provide safe and effective care to help people achieve better vision.*

- College Registrar:** Nick Atkinson, 604.278.7510, extension 22  
natkinson@cobc.ca
- Exam and Education Coordinator:** Annika Redford, 604.278.7510, extension 23  
aredford@cobc.ca
- Registration Coordinator:** Michael Tsao, 604.278.7510, extension 24  
mtsao@cobc.ca

## WANTED: A FEW GOOD PEOPLE

There are two openings at the College currently, and both may be a potentially fulfilling position for an optician seeking to further their career.

**Education and Committee Coordinator / full time:**

This position involves interaction with registrants and members of the public, and requires solid organizational skills, multi-tasking, written and oral communication skills, and self-initiative. Duties include supporting

the quality assurance and inquiries processes, MCE course accreditation, and minor bookkeeping. Pay is commensurate with experience.

*Please make inquiries to Nick Atkinson by December 31.*

**Examination Coordinator / part time:**

The successful candidate will liaise with the National Examination Coordinator, recruit and schedule examiners, set examination

dates, book the examination venues, ensure the appropriate equipment is at hand and oversee the examinations. College examinations are held four times each year, and each requires approximately 50 hours of work. Preference is for a person who has acted as an examiner before. This position would suit a person working from a home office.

*Interested?  
Contact Annika Redford*

## CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION:

*from page 1*

For those opticians that participated, your feedback will be reflected in a number of immediate changes. First among those is a website that is being developed to increase access to programs, and allow for opticians to provide immediate feedback on the various programs they have attended, with the goal of continuously improving the quality of the programs.

Participants will also be able to access lecture information online, enabling them to be better prepared. There are a number of other applications on this site that are being explored.

Another immediate outcome is the expansion of the work of the COBC's Quality Assurance Committee. They are now mandated to review opticians' feedback on the

continuing education programs, and respond appropriately. The COBC will work with the educational institutes and associations to integrate feedback into their programming. In this way, the COBC will ensure that education, rather than credits, is the main focus of continuing education efforts.