

VISION MATTERS

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Upcoming Events:

- November 21, Vancouver
Continuing Education
South of Rotation, More Frustration
To Register:
Maureen Harrison,
(800) 847-3155
- November 24,
Douglas College
Continuing Education
Advanced Slit Lamp and Ocular Evaluation
To Register:
Ted Littlewood (604) 777-6123
- December 5, Vancouver
College of Opticians of BC
Board of Directors Meeting
- December 12, Richmond
Continuing Education
DOABC seminar
Information:
(604) 925-0958
www.doabc.org

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR:

WELCOME TO OUR NEW LOOK

Welcome to our revamped and revised newsletter. The changes are part of our commitment to improve communications between opticians and the College, as well as the public we all work hard to serve.

Not only do we have a new look, but we have changed the content slightly too. We want to make this relevant to you, and your practice.

There will be some regular features, including an update on regulatory changes, profiles on opticians—starting with the hardworking members of our Board—and a review of new issues that challenge you in your practice.

Take some time to review the publication, and then tell us what you think. Do you like the changes? Do you like the content? What more would you like to



The College's new home is centrally located, and easily accessible.

see? Are there any issues you would like addressed? You'll notice a questionnaire inserted into this newsletter. Please take the time to fill it in, and fax it back to us. The survey is also available on the College's website. Your input

will help improve our communications with you. We'll be sure to include a summary of the results in a future edition of the newsletter. Until then, I look forward to receiving your feedback.

- David Martens, Chair

CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION:

WHY, AND HOW WE CAN HELP

The phrase "Mandatory Continuing Education", or MCE, is one that is likely to meet with a variety of reactions from opticians in the province. While the professional obligation to continually upgrade ones skills

may seem like an additional challenge in what is likely an already busy schedule, there are clear reasons for making this a priority. Rapid changes in technology, and breakthroughs in research chal-

lenge, every health care professional to update and add to their expertise. Providing service to the public means that professionals, including opticians, must maintain a working knowledge and

ADVOCATING FOR THE FACTS: AN UPDATE ON AUTOMATED SIGHT TESTING REGULATIONS

The College has been working with the provincial Ministry of Health Services to finalize recommendations for regulations governing stand alone auto-



BC's Legislative Assembly

mated sight testing. Since the provincial government's announcement in March 2004, the College conducted consultations with its members and the public, and provided the province with recommendations on how to ensure that regulations both protect public safety and increase public access to this critical vision care service.

Since providing our input

into the draft regulation, the College has attended both a formal consultation session, as well meetings with provincial officials to clarify a number of technical issues, including implementation plans. We have been able to assist the provincial government in a number of areas. For example, part of the government's review includes ensuring that the regulations would be compatible with all other pieces of legis-

lation and regulation, on the provincial books. The College has assisted with this review, and has proposed ways to ensure consistency between the proposed regulation and existing statutes.

It is attention to this type of detail that is going to ensure the smooth implementation of the regulation, once it is proclaimed by the provincial government.

The College is also finalizing patient and public communications materials to assist with the implementation of the new regulation. Of primary concern is the need for all opticians to ensure that their clients understand the difference between a vision or sight test, and a complete eye health exam. To this end, the College has just sent opticians public education materials that should be used when talking to potential clients about sight testing. This includes a brochure that explains eligibility requirements, and also stresses the importance of regular eye health exams.

While the College has been told the regulation could receive approval by mid-December, the date is a 'best guess' based on current circumstances. The College will be providing updates to registrants as they become available.

The College has recently sent opticians public education materials that should be used when talking to potential clients about sight testing

IN THE NEWS:

PROBLEMS REPORTED WITH ORTHO K

In October, national news outlets reported adverse reactions in patients who had undergone the procedure orthokeratology. Orthokeratology uses the extended wear of rigid contact lens to reshape the cornea and therefore improve vision. While this procedure is normally associated with optometric practices, some opticians

also offer this service. Opticians need to be aware that Canadian ophthalmologists have identified four cases of serious infection relating to these lenses. These include a corneal ulcer, a patient with permanent vision loss in her right eye and another patient left legally blind after contacting acanthamoeba infection in

both eyes. Contact lenses fitters offering this procedure need to be aware ophthalmologists warn that it increases the risk of serious and even sight threatening infections. Opticians should also know that Health Canada reports that only one of the manufacturers offering these lenses for sale in Canada actually has a license.

A CLOSER LOOK:

JOHN MOSS OF UNITED OPTICAL

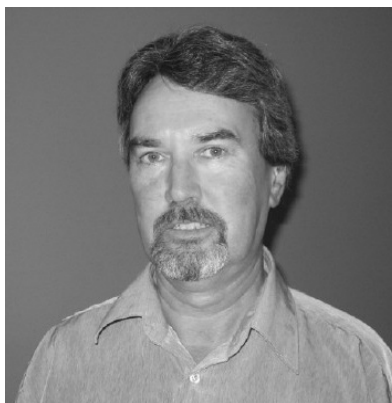
John Moss has been a practicing optician for 34 years. John got his first taste of opticianry early in life, listening to his father and his colleagues discussing their work. In 1972, John proudly joined United Optical to work alongside his father, Robert Moss. At that time, they were one of only two optical outlets in Abbotsford. Today, there are more than 15 optical stores and services in the area.

That's not the only thing that has changed in the past three decades. "There has been tremendous change with regards to optics, particularly when it comes to types of lens materials and bifocal options. It used to be the options were glass or glass. Plastic lens were just starting to become available at the beginning of my career, but they

were not to the same quality as today's plastic lens and would often yellow. Now there are dozens of different types of highly sophisticated glass and plastic lens available."

Another area of interest, which John expects great things from in the future, is in the application of telemedicine in the practice of opticianry. John has already seen such advances in the eye care profession and believes, "Canadians are doing great research in the eye care field."

In additions to caring for the needs of his customers at United Optical, John is actively involved with the College of Opticians of British Columbia. John sits on the College's Board of Directors, Executive Committee and is



Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee. Continuing Education is a primary focus of the Quality Assurance Committee, ensuring that opticians continue to keep up with advances in knowledge, practice and technology. John's personal commitment to continually updating his knowledge includes attending the seminar on Macular Degeneration, being hosted by Bausch and Lomb this November.

John Moss contributes to the profession in many ways, including his work on the Continuing Education program through his participation on the College's Quality Assurance Committee.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

OBTAINING PATIENT INFORMATION

A number of opticians have had challenges when trying to obtain patient information from other health professionals. An example of this is obtaining a patient's existing visual assessment or prescription from other health care professionals.

As a regular practice, the College suggests using the

"Authorization to Release Personal Information" form whenever requesting this information.

The form can be found on the College's website (www.cobc.ca). It conforms to the Personal Information Protection Act, and therefore provides permission for the other professional to transfer of

information. The College recommends using this form when first requesting this information. This process should assist in avoiding confrontation, and should resolve any challenges before they start.

Should you still have difficulty after taking this step, please contact the College and let us know.

College of Opticians of British Columbia

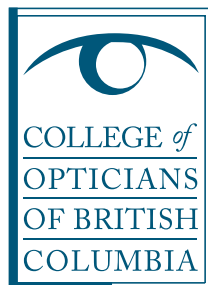
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We're on the Web,
<http://www.cobc.ca>

*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:

*Protecting the public through the regulation of optical dispensaries
Establishing and endorsing professional standards
Monitoring, evaluating and, where necessary, disciplining its registrants
Educating the public and promoting ophthalmic health*

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CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION

proficiency in their field. For the new members of the profession, staying up-to-date is a fairly easy task. But for those members with more years of experience, it does take more effort to upgrade and adapt. While most opticians upgrade their skills as a regular activity, the government and public wish this to be more than just a routine. They have demanded that this be a requirement of every regulated health professional.

How We Help

The College is committed to assisting its registrants in meeting their educational requirements, and maintaining professional standards. There are three specific programs the College relies on: *Continued Education*; *Continued Competency*; and *Practice Review*.

The *Continued Competency* program is based on a self-assessment model, and provides opticians with the equipment and resources to test their skills and improve service delivery. Opticians are selected for this program on a rotating basis.

Practice Review relies on random visits by College inspectors to an opticians place of business. It is an opportunity to have your questions answered, and to ask advice on

areas of concerns. The purpose of these reviews is not to surprise or punish, but to ensure that regulatory and professional standards are being met.

Continued Education requires each optician to complete a number of hours of formal courses and seminars within every three year period. The number of hours required depends on whether the optician has eyeglass, contact lens, or sight testing specialties. There are a number of ways to achieve your continuing education requirements. 70% of the credits must be obtained through College-designated professional providers of continuing education. Currently, these are the Dispensing Opticians Association of BC, the Opticians Association of Canada, Douglas College, and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. Any study club registered with the College also qualifies. Up to a maximum of 30% of the total credits required may be obtained from "approved related organizations" (ARO). Optical suppliers, and another health profession regulatory body such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons, are good examples. Courses such as standard first aid and CPR would also qualify. For more information, and a list of upcoming events, visit our website at www.cobc.ca