

In looking back over the past year, the majority of complaints have arisen from problems with communication - either during a patient visit or from staff blocking access to the optometrist after a patient visit. The following recommendations are compiled from a variety of sources for your use when dealing with patient complaints:

- Timing -** Attempt to contact the patient shortly after a complaint has been received by your office. To procrastinate and leave the complainant sitting for several weeks without any communication from you or your staff will not solve the problem.
- Compassion -** Show your patient the respect he/she deserves. Acknowledging that a problem exists can go a long way to illustrate that you intend to address the issue. In fact, a simple, sincere apology meets some patient's expectations of resolution.
- Action -** After discussing the problem with your patient, several options usually come forward. Discuss each option with your patient and attempt to come to a mutual agreement to best resolve the problem.
- Documentation-** Always document and date every patient visit, phone call, e-mail or any discussion with the patient on their individual record. This will not only serve as a future reference for you and your staff, but will be an invaluable document should the issue proceed past mediation to a Hearing Tribunal.

Trust in your communication skills and try to resolve patient complaints in your office. The College's goal for this year is to attempt to reduce the workload of our mediators as much as possible.

## 8. VISION INSTITUTE OF CANADA WORKSHOP

The Vision Institute of Canada is offering a communication skills workshop. For further information, please contact the Registrar at the ACO office in Edmonton

### CHANGES?

Notify the ACO office with updated contact information including:

Name  
Address – home & practice locations  
E-mail address

Fax your changes to (780)466-5969; call (780)466-5999, 1-800-668-2694 [toll free outside Edmonton] or e-mail to admin@collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca

According to Bylaw 10, regulated members have 21 days to notify the ACO of any changes to their register.

**DR. WILLIAM M. LYLE** 1913 – 2006. Passed away peacefully at his home in Kitchener on Friday, March 17, 2006 at the age of 92. Born in PEI and raised in Prince Albert, Ont., Dr. Lyle graduated from Optometry in 1938. He spent nearly 20 years practicing in Winnipeg. In 1965 he became the first Canadian to complete his Ph.D. in Physiological Optics. He then returned to teach at the College of Optometry in Toronto. In 1967 he became one of the first five faculty members of the School of Optometry at the University of Waterloo. Memorial donations may be made to the University of Waterloo, School of Optometry, in Dr. Lyle's name.

## ACO Council

Although e-mail is the preferred method of communication with Council members, you may also contact any member of Council by telephone.

### Executive Committee

Dr. Gary Wetmore, President  
(780)871-5991  
wetmoreg@telus.net

Dr. Gerry Leinweber, Vice-President  
(403)346-1177  
gerry@doctorseyecare.ab.ca

Dr. Rod Huszar, Sec.-Treasurer  
(403)320-1144  
huszar@visualef.com

Dr. Bob DeMara, Past President  
(403) 225-5660  
drdemara@shaw.ca

### Council

Dr. Bruce Johnson  
(780)361-2020  
johnsonod@incentre.net

Dr. Mark Bourdeau  
(403)256-0606  
banacek44@hotmail.com

Dr. Shane Keddie  
(780)468-2020  
skedddie@telusplanet.net

### Public Members

Mr. Michael Nish  
Dr. Gary Christopher

### Registrar

Dr. Gordon Hensel  
(780)466-5999 or  
1-800-668-2694 outside Edmonton  
registrar@collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca



ALBERTA college  
of OPTOMETRISTS

the  
communicator

spring 2006

VOLUME 6 - ISSUE 1

## A Word from the President ... Gary Wetmore, O.D.

Approximately one month ago, Bill 14 was introduced in the Alberta Legislature. It was described as a "housekeeping" bill that dealt with simple, innocuous items for a variety of professions. To our surprise, it also contained a section that proposed a major change to the scope of practice for opticians. From a public protection standpoint, the ACO did agree to a number of proposed changes to their scope of practice; however, we could not agree to the following additions:

- [a] perform refractions; and
- [b] assess eye health.

Historically, all other professions who have requested increases to their scope of practice (in both restricted activities and non-restricted activities) have presented before the Health Professions Advisory Board (HPAB). These requests were discussed in an open and transparent forum with the end result allowing the Minister of Health to be able to make a logical and informed decision. Since refractions and assessment of eye health are both non-restricted activities, they were included in Bill 14 without having to go through the HPAB. Our response was that it doesn't matter whether an activity is restricted or non-restricted; the government has a responsibility to the Alberta public to ensure that health professionals have the proper skills, competencies and education to perform those procedures they are granted the right to perform.

The ACO requested two amendments to Bill 14:

- [a] remove the phrase "assess eye health"; and
- [b] insert the word "supervised" into perform refractions so that independent refractions will not take place.

We also requested that, if the Alberta Opticians Association is requesting an increase in their legislated scope of practice, they be treated like every other health profession and present

before the HPAB. We hope this matter will be resolved by the time you receive this newsletter. I cannot hope to summarize the multitude of meetings Dr. Hensel and others have had over the past few weeks. We have included with this mailing a copy of the letter recently sent to all Government MLAs that succinctly states our position. Should you require any further clarification of our position or wish to engage your Member of the Legislative Assembly, please contact any member of the ACO Council or the ACO office directly.

We have solicited the services of a new consultant who has extensive background in the legislative side of the HPA and the development of bylaws and policies for health professions. This was done to further facilitate our restructuring and redrafting of the ACO bylaws such that we are fully and seamlessly integrated into the HPA. Hopefully, our new format will be fully operational to coincide with our AGM.

In addition, the ACO and the AAO have begun a process of harmonizing selected functions for the sake of greater efficiency. At the request of an ACO member at the 2004 AGM the College has been exploring the acquisition of a permanent location. The ACO and the AAO are currently negotiating for the joint purchase of a building that will allow an enhanced public presentation for both organizations.

We are looking forward to a productive spring.

## ACO OFFICE HIGH-LIGHTS

### AAO PRESIDENT

The ACO is pleased to report that Dr. Steve Larsen has recovered from his sudden hospitalization and is back in practice at his main office. We wish him all the best for a full and complete recovery. Dr. Larry Gies has done a very admirable job filling in as Interim President and will continue as your Interim AAO President until the Fall AGM.

### DOCTOR OF LAWS DEGREE BESTOWED

Congratulations are extended to Dr. Scott Brisbin who was recently bestowed a Doctor of Laws Degree from the University of Waterloo. This honour reflected recognition of his service to the science and art of optometry as well as his service to the profession at the local, provincial, national and international levels.

### HEALTH CANADA SAFETY WARNING

Health Canada recently issued a safety information circular regarding the association of Avandia and Avandamet with new onset and worsening of macular edema. Please review the Health Canada or GlaxoSmithKline website update and advise your patients and their family physicians accordingly.

### CELL PHONES AND YOUR PRIVACY

Since cell phone calls can be easily intercepted, the ACO recommends that landline phones be used when discussing private matters with patients, colleagues, other health professionals and your College.

### NEW ACO WEBSITE

The college office has recently changed their internal computer system to allow seamless integration of all work stations, the server and our new website. The public side of our new website is currently up and running at [www.collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca](http://www.collegeofoptometrists.ab.ca).

Please visit the site and send any suggestions for improvement you might have or general comments to Dr. Mark Bourdeau. It is anticipated that the members-only side will be made available by mid 2006.

## COUNCIL HIGH-LIGHTS

### NEW BYLAWS AND GOVERNANCE POLICIES

The entire ACO Council has been diligently working to draft new ACO Bylaws and Council Governance Policies that will bring the College into the next evolutionary stage as an organization. All regulated members will be receiving these two new documents, as well as a new position description for a Registrar/CEO in the next month. Please take the time to review these documents and provide any recommendations for change or comments to Dr. Gordon Hensel, Registrar and CEO, at the ACO office.

Plan to attend the upcoming ACO AGM in Edmonton at the end of September for discussion as the College will be seeking ratification of these documents by all regulated members in attendance at this meeting.

### FUTURE PROCLAMATION OF OPTICIANS UNDER THE HPA

Alberta opticians will soon be proclaimed into the Health Professions Act. When this occurs, all opticians will have to become licensed with the new Alberta Opticians College. Please note that optometric or ophthalmic assistants are not considered opticians so they will not have to register with the Alberta Opticians College. Please refer to Section 28 and 46 of the Health Professions Act for complete details about mandatory registration.

### BILL 14

Over the course of the past month Drs. Shane Keddie and Gordon Hensel have attended several meetings per week with Alberta Health & Wellness officials, MLAs and Ministers regarding proposed changes to an optician's scope of practice. It came as quite a surprise to learn that the Alberta Opticians Association has not been abiding by their current legislation (from the 1960s), but rather have been using Regulations that were proposed by the Opticians Association in the early 1990s, but which have never received proclamation by Government. During the course of these meetings our public protection mandate is always at the forefront of discussions. Included in this mailing please find a copy of a letter sent to all government MLAs that succinctly stated the ACO position.

### HEALTH POLICY FRAMEWORK

Drs. Gary Wetmore, Gerry Leinweber and Gordon Hensel made a presentation to the Hon. Iris Evans, Minister of Health & Wellness, as well as other members of the Health Policy Framework on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006. Our written and verbal presentation touched on all ten points of the proposed new Health Policy. We concentrated our efforts on expanded integration of optometric services in the public sector and expanded scope of practice. Should you wish further information about the Government's proposed plan, please visit [www.yourhealth.gov.ca](http://www.yourhealth.gov.ca). Again, we have included a copy of our position paper with this mailing.

## From the Registrar ... Gordon Hensel, O.D.

### 1. PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION DESCRIPTORS

Optometrists are allowed to utilize a descriptor in their professional corporation name. The descriptor may be inserted between the words "Professional" and "Corporation". The two descriptors approved by Council are "optometry" or "optometric". As a result, your professional corporation can now be identified as John Smith Professional Corporation; John Smith Professional Optometry Corporation; or John Smith Professional Optometric Corporation.

You may only choose one of these names for a Professional Corporation. If you would like to change the name of your professional corporation, please complete, sign and submit the appropriate Alberta Business Corporations Act form to an authorized service provider as well as complete, sign and submit the ACO Professional Corporation Name Change Form along with a cheque for \$50.00 to the ACO office. Please let us know how many copies of your professional corporation permit you require (no extra charge for additional copies when permits are sent together). Complete details about how to make a name change are listed in the new ACO Professional Corporation Advisory included in the mailing package for this newsletter.

### 2. HEALTH PROFESSIONS PROCLAIMED TO DATE

As of February 2006, 16 professions have been proclaimed under the Health Professions Act. The Alberta Government is committed to proclaim the remaining 12 professions by the end of 2006 in order for their new Health Policy Framework to proceed.

### 3. ALBERTA OMBUDSMAN

The Alberta Ombudsman's website has recently been revised. Since the Ombudsman is now responsible for all health professions regulated under the Health Professions Act, we ask that all regulated members visit [www.ombudsman.ab.ca](http://www.ombudsman.ab.ca) to learn more about the role, responsibilities, etc. of the Ombudsman's office.

### 4. UNSUCCESSFUL CHALLENGE OF THE CSAO EXAM

Applicants who fail the CSAO exam three times will be referred to the University of Waterloo Bridging Program before being allowed to challenge the CSAO exam again as an Alberta applicant. These graduates will be allowed to practice under the ACO Internship Program in the time frame between completion of the program and the next sitting of the CSAO Exam.

### 5. NEW ADVISORIES

New Advisories are included with this newsletter mailing. Please review and file in your blue ACO binder. All Advisories will be available on the ACO website in the near future.

### 6. CO-MANAGEMENT GLAUCOMA PATIENTS

The ACO would like to remind members that only ophthalmologists may co-manage glaucoma patients with optometrists. The exact logistics of the co-management arrangement is left up to you and the ophthalmologist. Both the optometrist and ophthalmologist should discuss, understand and accept their respective roles and responsibilities. Your patient record should include all written correspondence and summaries of any telephone calls. Pharmacies who are undergoing an on-site practice review may phone your office to verify the name of the co-managing ophthalmologist. Should your office receive a phone call during a pharmacist's on-site practice visit we ask that you co-operate with this review process and return the phone call as soon as possible.

### 7. MEDIATORS/MEDIATIONS

A special welcome is extended to Dr. Harvey Hazelaar, the new Edmonton North Mediation Chairman. Special thanks are also extended to Dr. Laurie Newman for taking over this position on a short-term basis from Dr. Bruce Butts. Commendations and thanks to our other provincial mediators, Drs. Wayne Klettke and Doug Howes, who continue to perform their mediation duties sometimes in very difficult circumstances.