

Editorial • In Memory of Iz: Dr. Israel Greenwald

Ilana Gelfond-Polnariiev, OD • State University of New York College of Optometry
New York, New York



Dr. Israel (Iz) Greenwald was an exemplary teacher, mentor, and human being. He is known as a legend among his vision therapy colleagues nationally and internationally. The unexpected and surprising news of Iz passing deeply saddened me and our community. I fondly recall the first time I met Iz at his practice in Staten Island, NY when I was in high school. Iz was a true gentleman—always dapper, even-tempered, and mild-mannered. His passion for optometry, and in particular for pediatrics and vision therapy, inspired me to pursue this field and fostered dreams of helping generations of patients. I'm humbled and thrilled that I followed in his footsteps.

During my residency training at SUNY College of Optometry, I found his lectures captivating and invaluable. The depth and breadth of his knowledge was astounding, which was no surprise, considering that he was a life-long learner. The way that he connected with patients of all ages was simply remarkable. He would often whisper quietly to a child in order to draw their attention—it was magical and always worked. He helped thousands of patients over

his long and successful career. I had an opportunity to work closely alongside Iz for over 15 years. I gained from his clinical wisdom and modeled his deft ability to interact with patients. What better way to learn and to help others than to observe and to discuss patient care directly with the field's legend?

Iz wore many notable hats and made significant contributions to the field of optometry. He served as a faculty member at the SUNY College of Optometry, where he was an Adjunct Clinical Professor; a past president of the New York State Optometric Association (NYSOA); an examining member of the IECB; an author; and a lecturer in the area of strabismus. He practiced with Dr. Frederick Brock, another legend. I would tease Iz that he used the original Brock string in the practice to treat his patients. We did actually use the original Brock posture board at the practice! It was remarkable to use the original equipment.

I loved our frequent discussions on countless and varied clinical cases, accompanied by a cup of tea and an apple or some nuts. During our years together on the IECB, we made sure that all of the meals included a healthy option, as Iz desired. It took me over 10 years to be able to call him Iz (instead of Dr. Greenwald) as he gently suggested during our casual chats.

As the news of Iz's passing spread throughout our profession and social media, the outpouring of tributes from the hundreds of doctors who he inspired resonated with us all. My approach in treating patients and teaching students will always be deeply grounded in what Iz taught me, directly and indirectly. He will be missed dearly but remembered forever.

