

# GUEST EDITORIAL

## PRESIDENTIAL THOUGHTS

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**I** will remember graduating from optometry school saying, "Well I'm not going to have anything to do with children and that binocular vision stuff!"

I have often reflected upon what made me feel that way and have come to realize that, sadly, it was a lack of knowledge. I think most human beings try to avoid the things they do poorly and I have come to realize that this was the basis for my strongly declared statement. Unfortunately my understanding of the visual process at that time was woefully inadequate. The course taught was not well structured and certainly not well understood by the students. So, my words came from fear of dealing with the unknown and an overlaying fear of creating a thing called intractable diplopia if one dared to mess with two eyes that didn't function as a team.

My road to discovery came gradually during the first years of practice. One of the favourite sayings of the head of our school had been "if the patient has symptoms then treat them." (Advice that should still be given today). So when people attended the office with vague symptoms associated with close work I tried to help using the tools I had at my disposal – lenses. Trial and error showed me that, in many cases little was helpful; in other instances different problems were created. After a time I realized I had a questionable rationale for what I prescribed.

I began a search for the reasons why some lenses helped while others did not. This began with an optometric group in Brisbane that met and discussed children's vision, then lectures from a Sydney optometrist, Charles McMonnies. Later I attended lectures in Sydney with a group led by Chris Henderson called OEP. The lecturer who stands out in my mind as a turning point was Bill Ludlam who visited in the early 1980s. Here was a person with passion who told me what and why I should prescribe. I became another devotee to the cause.

The thirst for knowledge about the use of lenses and vision therapy made practice even more fun. There were these people in the world who learnt from me as I learnt from them - my *patients*. Some of my loyal patients from that time remind me of the times we "played" or "experimented" together and the fun we had doing it. I am very fortunate to have had other optometrists working with me. Rob and Claire Alexander were there. Weekly dinners were the norm while we talked "shop" and later Adrian Bell, the current president of the Australasian College of Behavioural Optometrists (ACBO) joined the group. We had others join in at various times. How fortunate I was to have had a study group within the practice.

In 1987 a new organization was born in Australia. ACBO was the brainchild of a group led by Chris Henderson and Graham Peachey. I was asked to serve

on the executive as Vice President. These were exciting times. Apart from being involved in the general administrative activities associated with a new organization there was planning for the Fellowship program and setting future goals.

In the early 1990s there were meetings with the University of New South Wales and a postgraduate course in behavioural optometry was born. The lecturers for the course were and still are Fellows of ACBO and I feel privileged to be one of these people. This course has enabled many optometrists from around the world to begin their journey toward understanding the human visual system. It continues to stimulate the thinking of both attendees and the lecturers.

In 1992 I was elected president of the College. ACBO hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Behavioural Optometry in 1994. This was one of the largest optometry conferences ever held in Australia. We had visitors from around the world and many friendships were made among the attendees, friendships that grew over the years. As the College became financially more stable and membership grew, my understanding of the human visual process continued to develop. During this time I also gained skills in conference organizing, public speaking and working with an organizational team.

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