

# GUEST EDITORIAL

## BEHAVIORAL OPHTHALMOLOGY

### IS IT A POSSIBILITY OR MAYBE A PROBABILITY?

■ Greg Gilman, O.D., D.O.S.

**T**his editorial is intended to discuss the prospect of behavioral optometrists inviting ophthalmologists to learn about the behavioral philosophy. I am sure many ophthalmologists will not be interested, just as many optometrists are not interested. However, I believe some ophthalmologists may be receptive to a different way of thinking. It could be in our best interest, in their best interest and in the public's best interest to invite them to learn about our philosophy.

Marty Kane, O.D., wrote a compelling editorial in the *Journal of the American Optometric Association*<sup>1</sup> shortly before he passed away. He cited references in ophthalmological journals published between 1980 and 1990 which highlighted the recognition by some ophthalmologists of the relationship between vision and learning. These articles also suggested that ophthalmology has abdicated some areas of responsibility to optometry.

The idea of inviting ophthalmologists to attend our seminars and conferences may be inconsistent with some optometrists' personal ideas about our profession. However, consideration can be given to the fact that ophthalmologists teach at optometry schools

and frequently at optometric continuing professional education programs. A small number have even gone out on a professional limb to support the direction of optometry into ocular disease diagnosis and treatment. Further, most optometrists have an established relationship with a local ophthalmologist for referral purposes. We have had some allies in the ophthalmological profession, albeit a small number. This is not meant to suggest that professional and political ophthalmology have been friendly to optometry; they have not, but individual relationships have been successful.

Dr. A. M. Skeffington made a concerted effort to integrate information from all sources. He searched many other professions, looking for those that could add to a greater understanding of vision. I think for many years we have missed that healthy input from professions outside optometry, particularly medicine. It is possible that interested ophthalmologists might contribute to our behavioral model. We will never know unless we make an effort to communicate with them. Even if they are unable to add additional understanding now, at some point in the future they may help us, and consequently our patients, by giving insight from a different perspective.

The purpose of this editorial is to encourage discussion of this idea, i.e., should we make a unified effort to begin communicating about vision with the medical profession? Should ophthalmologists be invited to our seminars?

I encourage you to respond to this editorial in the "Letters to the Editor" column and give your opinion. What are your feelings about this possibility? Would it be good for behavioral optometry? Would it be good for ophthalmology? Would it improve our relationship with ophthalmology and maybe help in our relationship with pediatricians? Would it be good for the public, particularly for children? Would it help to promote more behavioral care worldwide?

#### Reference

1. Kane M. Demise of a myth? *J Am Optom Assoc*, 1992, 63: 2.

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