

# Editorial • It is Not Enough to Preach to the Choir: Why I Write for Everyone Else

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I caught the writing bug as a student. I approached Dr. Andy Gurwood, a staff doctor at PCO and prolific author, about writing, and we went to work on a paper all about sarcoidosis. To be honest, after we finished it, I moved on with my career as a student and forgot about it. Well, several years later, when doing an internet search, I came across my paper in print in a UK journal. It was my first published work, and I hungered for more. I promptly reached out to the publisher and pitched my services, and I guess they were desperate, so they took me up on the offer. I authored several more pieces with *Optometry Today*, including a 3-piece series on the treatment of patients with special needs.

It has been over 15 years, so the memory is fuzzy on the details, but I somehow got connected with *Review of Optometry* and began writing articles ranging from diagnostic devices to the care of pregnant patients. These topics were requested by the editor. Eventually I got to pitch my own topics! I had hit the big time in my mind.

The associate editor I worked with moved on to be the big boss at *Optometry Times*, so my energies were directed to that periodical. Since I had cut my teeth and proved my worth previously, I got to choose my own topics on which to write. It was with *Optometry Times* that I spread my wings and wrote on brain injury and vision therapy topics. In 2014, I penned "Vision Therapy: A Top Ten Must-have List", followed by a second VT top-ten article, followed by "My Top Ten VT Books". Well, who could have guessed that the original VT top-ten article would make its way up the most read *Optometry Times* articles of the year list



and, in 2018, be ranked in the top spot? I was promised an award of some sort, but I will settle for a nice steak and glass of scotch!

In the fall of 2014, I got an email from one of the editors at *Review of Optometry*. They were looking to add a column highlighting refractive care and queried who I might suggest to author it. I threw out a few names, but at the top of the list was someone I worked with every day, Paul Harris, since he eats, breathes, and dreams this stuff! His first comment back ... why can't we work on it as a team? Well, I never would have suggested that I write the column, but since it was his idea ... we pitched the team approach. They loved the idea; *Focus on Refraction* was conceived. The column was introduced six months later to broad approval. We cover topics related to accommodation, anisokonia, occlusion, prism, and how to approach complex refractions. This is done in a discussion- and case-based format. We have an enormous amount of fun working together on the column. Four years later, we have just published our 25th column!

We write for *Review of Optometry* to provide primary eye care providers seeds of thought and to put the focus (pun intended) back on the meat and potatoes of optometry. Our aim is to write for the broader audience who practice far more closely to the mantra "correct the refractive error". A greater amount of data is gathered for case reports than can ever be presented; extraneous information is left on the cutting room floor. Occasionally, we can only touch on a subject and not get too deep in the woods. While it can be a challenge, it is also necessary for the audience we are trying to reach.

Harris says, "Our main purpose is to get those who read to consider alternatives in their prescribing. Ideas like function alters structure and embeddedness are not tackled directly but are integral to every one of our jointly written articles. Our act of making explicit our thinking and rationale helps our readers to question their assumptions. The ultimate winners are the patients they serve. This journey has been wonderful."

We must be doing something right; the *Focus on Refraction* column is the most read column digitally for *Review of Optometry*. We have received numerous emails from the readers thanking us for the columns and asking us for more; each one makes us smile. It is our mission to educate, and by writing, I am fulfilling my mission.