



ALBERTA college
of OPTOMETRISTS

ANNUAL REPORT

TO

GOVERNMENT

2004

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Alberta College of Optometrists is to ensure that the practice and the promotion of Optometry within Alberta is conducted in the best interests of the public through the exercise of the regulatory powers granted to the College in the Health Professions Act, the Optometrists Profession Regulation and the By-laws of the College.

OBJECTIVES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To ensure that Albertans have access to the best possible vision and eye health care available, the objectives and responsibilities of the Alberta College of Optometrists include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Conducting the activities, affairs, management and governance of the College.
- Determining the academic and other qualifications required in order for an optometrist to obtain a license to practice in the province.
- Promoting the practice of optometry in the public interest.
- Monitoring, reviewing and improving on the standards of practice for optometry in Alberta in order to better serve the public, and to enhance the profession.
- Ensuring all optometrists maintain and continue to enhance their competence.
- Assisting in the resolution of any dispute that may arise between a patient and an optometrist
- Disciplining any optometrist who has been found guilty of unprofessional conduct or unskilled practice, according to current legislation.
- Representing the profession of optometry to the Government in dealings related to legislation of the profession.
- Carrying out the intent of the Health Professions Act and the Optometrists Profession Regulation of the Province of Alberta.
- Working with government and other health care professions for the purpose of ensuring that Albertans have access to the best health care available.

**Alberta College of Optometrists
COUNCIL ROSTER
2004**

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**PRESIDENT'S REPORT
2004 A.G.M.**

Kenneth E. Carlson, O.D.

It has been my pleasure to serve as the President of the Alberta College of Optometrists during a year of consolidation. For several years the College functioned during change necessitated by external forces. Those were the years which concluded with the federal and provincial privacy acts that became effective on January 1, when we worked to develop our Regulation in order to come under the Health Professions Act, and during which time we fought major battles against sight testing in its various forms. This year we have had the "luxury" of conducting our affairs under that plethora of completed change.

After several years of re-development and in accordance with the provisions of the HPA, our Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice were presented for review to the Minister of Health & Wellness. The Health & Wellness Ministry sought input to their review from Alberta Children's Services, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, and the Alberta Opticians Association. The Registrar of the CPSA was most supportive of our efforts when he responded to Government that "The College of Optometrists is to be commended for its diligence in producing such a comprehensive guide for the behaviour of their professional members".

A number of the suggestions presented to the Minister by these groups were incorporated into the final documents. The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice have now been printed in a presentation format, along with the completed Guidelines to the Standards of Practice and the Continuing Competence Program. Our Registrar is now working to develop a comprehensive list of Advisories to complement the material in the package.

Those among you who have recently had a practice audit will have noted the new format, which aims to enhance and assess the knowledge, skills, and judgment of the optometrist and to ensure he/she meets the standards of practice as set out by the College. The program is designed to be honest and fair, flexible, non-threatening, accountable, measurable, and educational. It provides the practitioner as well as the College a clear measure of his/her competence to practice.

Our annual Think Tank this year took place in Victoria. Away from our cities/towns of residence and from the busy pace of our busy practices Think Tank provides council members with the opportunity to concentrate on the theory as well as the practice of regulating the profession. The result of this year's theorizing was the re-organization of the Council's committees and its committee priorities. For the first time, this year we invited our Public Members to participate, and their input proved extremely valuable.

Public Members have been granted a much higher profile under the HPA, and it is mandated that they comprise 25% of the Council, hence the amendment to our By-laws. The ACO has been extremely fortunate in the two members who are completing their appointed three year terms. Mike Nish, of Sherwood Park, has graciously agreed to be re-appointed, but Carol Ryder, of Calgary, is moving on to the Chairmanship of the Board of the Bow Valley College in Calgary.

While the issue of remote supervision of sight testing in Alberta is still being addressed by our Council, it is at a much lower profile that had been the case in the past as we are now accumulating evidence of harm it causes. In British Columbia, however, the issue has been front and centre our with B.C. colleagues as opticians there have asked for an expanded scope that would permit them to sight test without supervision, remote or otherwise. Despite the powerful objections of the B.C. optometrists and the B.C. College of Physicians and Surgeons, and submissions against the proposal by professional organizations from across the continent, the ACO included, the process has been anything but transparent, honest or consultative. We will continue to stand by our B.C. colleagues to resist the degradation of the high standards of eye care available to Canadians, be they in British Columbia, Alberta or elsewhere.

Our three professional staff are to be commended for their dedication to the ideals of the College, and for their untiring efforts to satisfactorily deal with the day to day issues of running a professional regulatory body. One of those issues is dealing with government, particularly with the bureaucracy. However, despite the constant interaction of our staff with government, if we want to truly influence government each one of our members must be active in government. This is an election year. Get out and work for a candidate of your choice. Do not assume that someone else will take care of the issues that affect you. That someone else might just be a sight tester.

In closing, I wish to thank all the members of Council, particularly those who are stepping down at this 2004 AGM, as well as welcoming those who will take their place. It is a privilege to serve on this body and to shape the policies and set standards which will continue to ensure that Albertans are provided with the degree of expert eye care they deserve from our profession.

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

**Gordon Hensel, O.D., F.A.A.O.
Registrar & Complaints Director**

The Registrar is involved in many activities such as the preliminary handling of grievances, investigations of formal complaints, review of preliminary investigations,

assistance with the Hearings process, administration of new registrations, and, communication with other regulatory authorities, associations and government departments.

I would like to thank Dr. Rod Huszar, Chairman of the Competence Committee and Dr. Mona Purba, Chairman of the Registration Committee as well as their respective committee members for their exceptional and tireless work throughout the year on these two statutory committees. I would also like to thank Drs. Bruce Butts, Doug Howes, and Wayne Klettke for their efforts in mediating patient complaints. Bruce, Doug, and Wayne deserve all members' appreciation for volunteering for a difficult and time-consuming position. Their mediation skills and commitment to the profession of optometry has resulted in an almost 100% resolution of patient complaints. I would also like to thank Dr. Len Bistriz for volunteering for the position of Hearings Director. Although, he is not called upon on a daily basis, he has handled his new responsibilities in an efficient and compassionate manner. I would also like to thank all those individuals who have volunteered to be preliminary investigators when called upon by the College. They have all performed admirably in sometimes very difficult circumstances. Finally, I could not have performed any of my duties without the support and assistance of the College Council and office staff. A big thank you for Bonnie, Lesley and the entire Council for all their assistance this past year.

A total of 377 members and 233 professional corporations registered with the Alberta College of Optometrists in up to the time of the 2004 annual general meeting. The membership breakdown was as follows:

Active/regulated	119 Female	257 Male	376 Total
Courtesy	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Alberta	367		
Non Alberta	9		
Professional Corporations	233		

On behalf of the College, I would like to welcome the following optometrists who have registered with the College since last year's (2003) AGM:

Anne Tottrup	Tannis Shakya
Karin Rourke	Danae Walsh
Rob Struk	Harjit Gill
Hannah Park	Samantha Bourdeau
Mark Bourdeau	Paul Lathrop
Andrea Saetre	Jimmy Pham
Jeff Waddell	Tanya Lambden

Sunny Mehta
Kendra Ojanpera
Leanne Martin
Daniel Wang
Charles Simons

Kiran Ghumman
Jehad Torbeih
Charanjit Sihota
Tarek Hatoum

I also serve as the ACO representative to CORA (Canadian Optometric Regulatory Authorities). We meet twice a year to discuss issues common to all provinces, the CSAO exams, the Waterloo Bridging Program for international graduates and the Mutual Recognition Agreement. I also attend special CAO Leadership Forums as the ACO representative.

I would like to thank all regulated members I have had the pleasure of dealing with this past year. My duties do become difficult at times and I thank you all for your understanding and co-operation.

HEARINGS TRIBUNAL REPORT

**Leonard R. Bistriz O.D.
Hearings Director, ACO**

Under the Health Professions Act, the previously established Discipline Committee was transformed to the Hearing Tribunal. As a result, many changes to our hearing process have ensued.

The first major change is that the appointment term of our previous public member, Mr. Leonard J. Pollock, has expired. On behalf of the College Council and the membership, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Len for his time and commitment and wish him all the best in his future endeavors. The second major change is that we now select from a membership list for members to sit at a hearing tribunal. I would like to thank Dr.'s Dennis Heimdahl, Neil Starko, Frances Tatabe and Ernie Watson for volunteering to serve on this list. The third and last major change is that we must also select at least one public member to sit at each hearing. This public member may change for each different hearing.

Only one hearing will have taken place before our AGM. As this report will be written before the completion of that hearing, I cannot give any details at this time.

Mediator's Report – North

**Bruce L. Butts, O.D.
Chairman**

A total of 19 grievances were dealt with since last reporting to the membership.

Cases dealt with were:

- * respecting Ortho K treatment;
- * respecting the eye exam and not being happy with results and with patient wanting refund;
- * respecting request for old lens prescriptions; 1 case being more than 4 years old;
- * respecting adaptation to new prescription or didn't like results; and
- * respecting communications problems about various matters.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all practitioners who responded to their patients' concerns and who resolved the grievances quickly. Communication between doctor and patient remains the most common complaint and can always be resolved.

Mediator's Report – South

**Wayne Klettke, O.D.
Chairman**

Since the last AGM I have mediated 21 complaints which are identified as follows:

- * Problems with spectacle prescription = 5
- * Poor professional care = 5
- * Contact lens problems = 4
- * Fee disputes = 4
- * Release of chart information = 3

As always, keeping lines of communication open and clearly explaining fees is one of the keys that help avoid patient complaints. I would like to thank those members who have done an excellent job of resolving patient concerns as they arose.

Mediator's Report - Lethbridge/Medicine Hat

**Doug Howes, O.D.
Chairman**

Over the course of this past year I received only four inquiries as Chairman of the Mediation Committee for Lethbridge/Medicine Hat.

These inquiries included:

- * Concerns about being treated rudely by office staff.
- * Questions about warranty for progressive lenses.
- * Concerns about patient confidentiality.

All enquiries were resolved quickly once the patient's concerns were brought to the attention of the doctor.

I wish to extend my thanks to all optometrists in this area for continuing to communicate effectively with their patients and for their co-operation when called upon to resolve patient concerns.

PRIVACY COMMITTEE REPORT

**Gordon Hensel O.D., F.A.A.O.
Privacy Officer, ACO**

As of January 01, 2004, new legislation affecting many privacy and confidentiality requirements came into effect. The intent of this legislation is not to drastically change the manner in which you practice, but to ensure the privacy rights of patients, employees and associates / partners.

The ACO researched the various Federal and Provincial Privacy Acts and provided a summary and an office checklist to ensure complete understanding and compliance with the legislation. We also provided various templates (of various documents) for use in your private office. The summary, office checklist and templates were mailed to all members earlier this year and are still available on the ACO website.

All the Federal and Provincial Privacy Acts attempt to balance an individual's right to have his / her personal information protected and your need to collect, use and disclose of that personal information for purposes that are considered reasonable. Reasonableness results from thinking about the situation, being fair and possibly putting yourself in your patient's position before making a decision.

Common questions pertaining to privacy requirements are summarized at regular intervals in the quarterly College Communicator.

CONTINUING COMPETENCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Rod. A. Huszar, O.D.
Committee Chairman

This past year has been a time of transition. Once our profession was included under the Health Professions Act your Practice Review Board evolved into the Continuing Competence Committee. Not only was there a name change, but duties and responsibilities were also amended to include the area of continuing education standards. We were charged with the development of a new Code of Ethics, Standards

of Practice and Guidelines to the Standards of Practice. We were also required to produce a new Continuing Competence Program to include practice audits as well as self assessments and remediation, to ensure the continuing competence of all optometrists practicing in the province.

I am happy to report that we are at the end of the first portion of our journey as the new Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice were submitted to Government and, by the time of our Annual General Meeting, I am hopeful that the College will be in a position to circulate the final version of these documents to all members.

In addition to the above duties and responsibilities, the Continuing Competence Committee completed 84 practice audits this past year.

I would like to recognize the members of the Continuing Competence Committee for their outstanding contributions this past year:

Recording Secretary Dr. Lance Couture, and Drs. Charles Klettke, Ed Jang, Bruce Johnson, Gary Watson, Alex Kennedy, Mira Chen, Kim Bugera and Sophie Jobin.

I have regretfully accepted the resignations of Drs. Bugera, Jobin, and Johnson from the committee. I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank them for their dedication and the time they spent in serving as members, especially during this transition period. I am pleased to welcome on board new members, Drs. Rod Eastwood and Holly Parker. I am sure we can all look forward to their continuing the good efforts of their predecessors.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT to AGM 2004

Lesley Jacobson

We are completing another very full and busy year, and once again I must applaud the efforts of our College Council members. In addition to maintaining busy professional practices, each one of them gives freely of their valuable time to ensure that decisions made on behalf of the membership are made in the best interests of the public and the profession. It is a pleasure to work with every one of them, and those who will be stepping down from the Council at the 2004 AGM will be sorely missed. Past President, Cindy Kruschel has served ten years on Council: Holly Parker has served 8 years, all of

them as Secretary Treasurer: Grant Balen has served two years, and Carol Ryder, one of our public members, is completing her third year.

I could condense this report dramatically by simply saying “more of the same” but that would not take into account the many facets of our role as a regulatory college, nor would it detail those activities which have kept us busy. In the words of the humorist, Will Rogers: “even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.”

Further compliance with the Health Professions Act has been a defining motif this past year. Our Council committee structure has been changed and at our annual Think Tank, chaired by President Ken Carlson, we refined the roles and responsibilities, and set priorities for each committee. One of the new committees established to address issues that we believe will impact the future of optometry in this province is New Technology and Techniques, under the chairmanship of Gerry Leinweber. All aspects of regulation relating to the HPA now come under the Registrar, Gord Hensel, while issues relating to Professional Conduct, including Standards of Practice, Ethics and Technology & Techniques are under the chairmanship of Gary Wetmore.

Members will have noticed that we have a new look. The decision was made to update our image, and to that end the Calgary firm of ID8 Design Group was hired by our Communications & Public Relations Committee to develop our new logo, update the Communicator, and provide a more professional look to our stationery and other printed materials. Still on our agenda is a “make-over” for the College web site.

Each member will soon receive the finished product of several years of work by Vice President Bob DeMara and College members from around the province. They undertook to rewrite our Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, which, after review by membership, and Council input, and, having been submitted to Government for review and comment, are now published in a package that includes rewritten Guidelines to the Standards of Practice. Also included in this package is the College’s new Continuing Competence Program which has been developed by Rod Huszar and his Continuing Competence Committee, and approved by Council. The Council extends a sincere thank you to the many members who were involved in these processes.

At the beginning of this year, when new privacy legislation was enacted, we reviewed a foot-high stack of privacy documents. Gord Hensel then developed a guide to the legislation for our members to assist them and their staff members in complying with the legislation, and even provided templates for the various necessary forms. These materials were mailed out to every member for inclusion in their College manual. They were also added to the web site for easy downloading and personalizing

Over the last few months we have upgraded our computer system and created a “server centric” computer environment for the College. Public member, Mike Nish, who also orchestrated our audit review, mentioned in the Notes to the Budget, served as our resource in reviewing proposed technology purchases.

Your professional staff and Council members continue to build relationships with members of the Government bureaucracy and with other regulatory colleges and

associations. Despite changes in manpower & responsibilities at AH&W, we are fortunate to be dealing with bureaucrats who have in-depth experience with the three 'O's and who respect the concerns we bring to them. As a member college of the Federation of Health Professions we meet regularly to discuss issues that arise as more and more professions come closer to that order in council that will bring them under the HPA, and as those already regulated by it come into compliance.

There are a number of interest groups that have been spun off from this federation, and we have been particularly active in the one devoted to Continuing Competence. In the spring NAIT School of Health Sciences hosted a Health Professions Conference that highlighted many of the topics on the Federation's agenda. I was interested to hear Sam Shaw, President of NAIT, refer to the school as a "technical institute" that provides "health technology training". I believe this definition will become important in the future as colleges attempt to determine questions of substantial equivalency when dealing with less qualified and/or off-shore applicants seeking registration.

We are still actively opposing the remote supervision of sight testing. Our challenge is to now prove that remote supervision of refractions is detrimental to the visual well-being of the public. Gord Hensel is continuing to document instances of harm, and we encourage all members to continue providing these examples to the College. In April the Government of British Columbia released draft wording for amendments to the B.C. Opticians regulation which would have permitted opticians to perform independent refractions for the purpose of writing or altering a prescription for glasses. Ken Carlson responded to B.C. Optometry's call for a submission to government opposing this action. B.C.'s Minister of Health has now committed to establishing a committee made up of optometrists, ophthalmologists and opticians, and to retaining a facilitator to assist in conducting a review of the issue.

On September 1 the Council hosted a reception for recent registrants. We welcomed seven new optometrists and Dr. Pat Murphy & Mrs. Peggy Sloan, who represented the Association. These new practitioners were pleased to have the opportunity to ask questions about privacy legislation, practice & employment arrangements, file ownership, the new competence program, etc. as well as to learn about the benefits of membership in the Association. We will hopefully make this an annual affair.

I conclude this report with a sincere thank you to the many members with whom I have inter-acted over the past year, and to my colleagues in the office, Dr. Gordon Hensel and Mrs. Bonnie Sniedze. You all contribute to the pleasure I derive from serving the Alberta College of Optometrists.



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STATEMENTS