



ALBERTA college
of OPTOMETRISTS

ANNUAL REPORT

TO

GOVERNMENT

2005

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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:

- 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
2005-2006**

Executive Committee

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President's Report

The past year at the College has been one of introspection and innovation. I believe the initiatives that your Council has taken will provide both a necessary balance in manpower in the College office as well as the tech tools to streamline efficiency and communication. Experimentation with voice-over-internet meetings and access to virtual reports, plus the scanning of all old committee reports and documents were the exciting challenges we faced during the year. Managing human resources was also a challenge, which I won't describe as being exciting, but certainly we didn't back away from the difficult decision to alter the structure of manpower in the College office.

The profession will benefit from the extensive work done by your Registrar, your Council representatives, and the many Committee volunteers who dedicated hours of personal time to fulfill our obligation to the Government and the public. The Continuing Competence Committee undertook the challenge of working under a modified program. This was their first year of using the new Standards of Practice and Guidelines as their measuring stick as opposed to the old Minimum Standards that we had all been accustomed to. I would like to thank Rod Huszar and his Continuing Competence Committee for their willingness to implement this undertaking.

The past year also saw a different approach to the annual Think Tank which took place for the first time in Cancun. There were challenges associated with holding the Think Tank in a location which seemed less conducive to thinking and more to socializing. In the end we realized that a balance of these two promoted the true objective of these meetings. During the course of our four half day sessions it was agreed that little or no reference material was to be brought to the meetings. The resulting brain storming sessions turned out many ingenious ideas and allowed us the luxury of entertaining some far fetched ones as well. I believe the experience was invaluable and the final day summary provided by our public member, Gary Christopherson, was excellent in that his non-optometric perspective gave credence to the new initiatives we identified and wished to undertake.

The Council is being forced by changing times and instrumentation to expend our energies in evaluating how to regulate new technologies and techniques. As you read and hear about "Information Technology", "New Technology and Techniques in Optometric Practice", "Advanced Training Designation", "Pandemic Influenza Contingency Plan," and "Competence Remediation", I believe you will share my belief that the College Council is moving into a positive phase of regulating the future of our profession. I have been fortunate to be surrounded by like-minded individuals with experience and knowledge beyond my advancing years, to assist in the task of assessment and reorganization. Public member, Mike Nish, is an expert in organizational management and has assisted the Council in reorganizing our Council member's responsibilities as well as assisting in the acquisition of appropriate computer hardware and software for the ACO office.

The government policy of allowing the remote supervision of a refraction continues to be a 'hang-over' from the past. A document outlining our position was presented to the new Health Minister, Iris Evans. Dr. Cindy Kruschel and Dr. Gordon Hensel created this document at her request as a result of a meeting we had with her in June. The prevailing position of Government is one that leaves the question of regulating the policy of remote supervision in the hands of those who wish to supervise the individual doing the refraction. The Alberta College of Optometrists has never endorsed the position of allowing such supervision for numerous and obvious reasons, leaving this task up to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta. Hopefully, this esteemed body will realize the liability associated with this practice doesn't warrant the limited gain by retaining it. We should be apprised of their position by next spring.

In June 2005, the College and the Association were asked to comment on the proposed Opticians Profession Regulation. The efforts by both groups resulted in two concise documents that indicated our respective positions. The results of our efforts will be known when the Opticians Regulations are released in October 2005.

The one thorny issue that will be divisive in our profession will be how your regulatory body handles the question of mandatory registration. The Health Professions Act is quite explicit in how it legislates those professions proclaimed under the HPA. There are diverging views as to how we should respond to the Act and other professions regulations. I won't begin to attempt the description of the potential scenarios, but suffice it to say that a measure of our profession's maturity will be on display.

I have enjoyed my year as President and very briefly pondered staying on for a second year as many initiatives that were fond to my heart have begun to take shape. I then remembered or was reminded of how much time and energy is expended on this responsibility. My advancing years take me to thoughts of RV-ing not GDx-ing, so I'll leave the position to those with the vision of change. I am very pleased with the balance of youth and experience in your upcoming Council. I also look back at when I was coerced onto Council by Dr. Marg Penny, and can honestly say it was the right decision at the right time for me. My final comments are to encourage each one of you to consider spending a few years of your practice life in the service of your profession. You and your profession will be enriched by it.

Respectfully submitted

Robert A. DeMara, O.D.
Chairman 2004-2005

Registrar's Report

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 Continuing 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 their duties in a highly professional manner in sometimes very difficult circumstances.

With the restructuring at the ACO office, I would like to welcome Bernadette Jensen as our new Administrative Assistant and I believe that I speak for all members in thanking Bonnie Sniedze for her tireless work in keeping the ACO office running smoothly all year long.

All committee reports are contained elsewhere in this AGM Report and provide details of their respective activities.

A total of 386 members and 252 professional corporations are registered with the Alberta College of Optometrists as of September 7, 2005. The membership breakdown is as follows:

Female Regulated Members	(33%)	127
Male Regulated Members	(67%)	259
Total Regulated Members		386

Of the 386 members, 8 are currently residing or practicing outside of Alberta.

On behalf of all Regulated Members, I would like to welcome the following optometrists who have registered with the ACO since last year's Annual General Meeting:

Alana Adams
Jennifer Ash
Adrian Atwell
Jeremy Begalke
Marcella Birk
Maggie Dale
Omar El-Houchaimi
Amanda Erickson
Shane Ferguson
Shauna Harbison

Colleen Gynp
Angela Giddens
Jason Hauck
Dwayne Lonsdale
Ali Moradian
Wesley Prince
Chelsea Syverson
Pamela Waayenberg
Noufal Mais
Dallas Falkenberg

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.

Finally, I would like to thank all the regulated members that I have had the pleasure of dealing with this past year. As a self-regulating profession, we are required to perform many functions that are in the best interest of the public - not in the best interest of the members of the profession. As such, my duties do become difficult at times and I thank you all for your understanding and co-operation.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Hearings Director's Report

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 occurred.

We now select from a membership list for members to sit at a hearing tribunal. I would like to thank Drs. Dennis Heimdahl, Neil Starko, Frances Tatabe, and Ernie Watson for volunteering to serve on this list. Another 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.

One hearing will be scheduled in the fall of 2005. (This hearing has subsequently been postponed to 2006.)

Respectfully submitted,

Leonard R. Bistriz, O.D.
Director

Hearing Tribunal Report

Refer to Hearing Director's Report above as no hearings were conducted in 2005.

Mediator's Report–North

I have dealt with 20 complaints this year. Two complaints involved fees and patients not understanding them. Five complaints involved problems with prescriptions not being correct. One complaint concerned glasses being too heavy, but the patient would not pay for thinner lenses. Seven complaints were due to poor communication. Two complaints were received because optometrists did not follow regulations with respect to billing. Three complaints indicated doctors did not treat patients well. I referred two of the complaints back to the Complaints Director and do not know how they eventually turned out.

With apologies from the doctors, the three complaints about poor communication were solved with better communication. I appreciate that practitioners were so willing to respond so quickly to all complaints and deal with them in a timely manner. In most cases, patients had lost confidence in the doctors due to poor communication and most of the work I have done could have been solved if optometrists and staff communicated better with their patients.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce L. Butts, O.D.
Chairman

Mediator's Report–South

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

- Missed or incorrect diagnoses = 6
- Problems with spectacles or contact lenses = 5
- Inappropriately charged fees = 5
- Release of prescription or contact lens information = 4
- Unprofessional attitude exhibited by the optometrist = 1

In almost every instance the complaint was successfully resolved by mediation. I would like to commend members of our profession for being proactive and keeping the lines of communication open, resulting in a very low number of complaints relative to patient visits. I would also like to thank those members who responded quickly to resolve the mediations as they arose.

Respectfully submitted,

Wayne Klettke, O.D.
Chairman

Mediator's Report–Lethbridge/Medicine Hat

This past year I received only 2 inquires as Chairman of the Mediation Committee for Medicine Hat/Lethbridge. These both involved complaints about adapting to new prescriptions and were resolved quickly with excellent co-operation from the optometrists.

Thanks to the optometrists in Medicine Hat and Lethbridge my job seems to be getting easier each year.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Howes, O.D.
Chairman

Privacy Officer's Report

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.

In some form or another, optometrists are legislated by the Health Professions Act (HPA), Health Information Act (HIA), Personal Information and Protection Act (PIPA), Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). The ACO researched these various Privacy Acts and provided a summary and an office checklist to Regulated Members to ensure complete understanding and compliance with all legislation. We also provided various templates (of various documents) for use in your private offices. The summary, office checklist and templates were mailed to all members and are available for download from the ACO website.

All of the Privacy Acts attempt to balance an individual's right to have his/her personal information protected and the need to collect, use and disclose of 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.

I have had to deal with a variety of inquiries from both the members of our profession as well as members of the public this past year. In order that all Regulated Members learn from the experiences of others, I have summarized some of these inquiries pertaining to privacy requirements and decisions in the past few College Communicators.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Continuing Competence Committee Report

This marks the first year that the Continuing Competence Committee (CCC) has been operating under the new ACO Continuing Competence Program. It has been a year of learning for both the ACO regulated members and members of the Continuing Competence Committee. I hope that everyone has taken the time to familiarize themselves not only with the Competence Program, but also with the Standards of Practice and Guidelines to the Standards of Practice that were circulated to all members this spring.

The Continuing Competence Program endeavours to ensure that regulated members in Alberta continue to practice to current accepted standards of practice as determined by the ACO. The program takes into consideration the number days of optometric practice in Alberta in a member's given 3 year period, number of continuing education credits accrued in this time frame, and stipulates practice audits of each member to access competence in the practice of optometry. If the Committee finds a practitioner to be deficient in any current accepted standard of practice, a remediation program is developed for the individual practitioner to complete before a follow-up practice audit is undertaken.

To date, the majority of practitioners who have undergone a practice audit under the new standards and guidelines have received a satisfactory review. The CCC will have completed 87 audits by the time this report is submitted to the ACO Annual General Meeting. The goal of the Committee is to ensure that all ACO members undergo a practice audit once every five years. New members are audited during their first year of practice. I am hopeful that everyone can appreciate the value of the CCC Program and look forward to his/her next practice audit as a positive experience meant to assure continuing competence and assist members meet these criteria in the best interest of public protection and enhancement of the profession.

I would like to thank all my Committee members for the countless hours of their time volunteered and their thoughtfulness when it seemed that their efforts were not appreciated. If you meet any of these volunteer members during our AGM meeting in September, take a moment to thank them for their contributions to our profession. Committee members include, Drs. Lance Couture, Peter McGuigan, Charles Klettke, Robert Eastwood, Alex Kennedy, Gary Watson, Christine Russo, Ed Jang, and Holly Parker.

On a personal note, I have decided to let my name stand for election to the ACO Council and have tendered my resignation as Chairman of the Continuing Competence Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Rod A. Huszar, O.D.
Chairman



ALBERTA college
of OPTOMETRISTS

2005

**AUDITED FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS**