

## A History of Israeli Optometry – 10 Year Update

Kenneth Koslowe, OD, MS, FCOVD-A;<sup>a</sup> Gene Stollman, OD, MAS<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Private Practice, Petach Tikva, Israel; <sup>b</sup>Private practice, Jerusalem, Israel

**Keywords:** history of Israeli optometry, Israeli optometry history, Israel optometry history, Israel Optometric Association, optometric history

The first organized group of Optometrists in Israel was founded in 1936 and was called the Association of Dispensing Opticians.<sup>1</sup> This was largely made up of a group of European trained Opticians/ Optometrists and was as much a social group as a professional organization. In the late 1940's the Israel Optometric Association (IOA) was founded by a group of English and South African trained Ophthalmic Opticians (and one USA trained Israeli OD) and limited its membership to graduates of recognized schools and colleges of Optometry.<sup>2</sup> With the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, Optometry existed as an unrecognized, unregulated yet permitted profession/trade.

By the late 1950's four different groups of Optometrists existed with separate by-laws, concerns and almost no cooperation among them.<sup>3</sup> The status quo might have prevailed indefinitely were it not for the efforts of Minister of Health Eliezer Shoshtak, in 1979, with the assistance of the Israel Optometric Association, to draft a pro-Optometry regulatory

proposal. Unfortunately, by the time the final draft was published as an Emergency Regulation (this has the force of law if no law exists) the proposal was virulently anti-Optometry.<sup>1</sup>

The next leap forward for Israeli Optometry occurred with the passage of the first Optometry Law in Israeli history in 1991.<sup>4</sup> The phrase "leap forward" is somewhat disingenuous since the law as written included numerous restrictive clauses which were not suited for modern Optometry. This made the law neither appropriate nor relevant for establishing

the profession of Optometry in Israel. The Ministry of Health also expanded the activities of its Optometric Advisory Board, consisting of two ophthalmologists, two optometrists and a representative of the Ministry (another physician). The law did include the recognition of Optometry as an independent

academic profession which necessitates an academic degree.

In 1993 the Minister of Education appointed a subcommittee to deliberate the establishment of such a program.<sup>1</sup> Four educational institutions submitted applications to establish an optometric program, and two were selected – The Hadassah Academic College in Jerusalem and Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan.

Together they graduate about 90 new Optometrists yearly. As in the USA, the debate continues as to whether this is too much, too little or just right. The Hadassah College program has now advanced to the point where a Masters Degree is offered, while Bar Ilan has such a program in development.

Both schools have active, functioning primary care and specialty optometric eye and vision care outpatient clinics with referrals from local optometrists, eye doctors and Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's) known as Kupot Cholim. The students have exposure to significant clinical experience in

“ ... today Optometry is united under one organization, the Israel Council on Optometry (ICO). ”

---

Correspondence regarding this article can be emailed to Dr. Kenneth Koslowe at [kenkoslowe@yahoo.com](mailto:kenkoslowe@yahoo.com) or sent to Dr. Ken Koslowe, 10 Ahimeir Street Petach Tikva, Israel, 972-3-933-2991. All statements are the authors' personal opinion and may not reflect the opinions of the College of Optometrists in Vision Development, Optometry & Vision Development or any institution or organization to which the author may be affiliated. Permission to use reprints of this article must be obtained from the editor. Copyright 2010 College of Optometrists in Vision Development. OVD is indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals. Online access is available at <http://www.covd.org>.

Koslowe K, Stollman G. A history of Israeli optometry – 10 year update. *Optom Vis Dev* 2010;41(1):20-21.

---

refraction, anomalies of binocular vision, diagnostic and therapeutic agents, and determining deviations from the normal eye before graduating.

The three Optometric societies eventually joined and today Optometry is united under one organization, the Israel Council on Optometry (ICO).

The major issues debated in Israeli Optometry today are as follows:

1. The Israel Optometry Law was written before the two academic level schools of optometry were established and should be modified and/or amended. This will be a long and arduous process. Among the issues that are currently under discussion are: age restrictions, diagnostic pharmaceutical agents, vision therapy/binocular vision, and the need for a one year apprenticeship after graduation.
2. Continuing education opportunities exist through the two schools and the Israel Council of Optometry advocates a program of continuing education for license renewal. This is not yet mandatory for any profession in Israel.

Israeli optometry is not yet heavily apparent in the optometric world, but this is starting to change. Graduates of our programs continued on to successfully complete advanced degree programs at the University of Houston, State University of New York, and Pennsylvania College of Optometry. As this issue of the journal *Optometry & Vision Development* attests, our mark will continue to be apparent in research and education. Israeli authored optometric articles have also appeared in other peer-reviewed professional journals.

From the very humble “tradesmen” beginnings, Israeli optometry can be proud of where it exists today, with every hope for an even brighter future.

### References:

1. Stollman G. Remembrance of things past. *J Amer Optom Assoc* 1998;28:329-332.
2. Raphael J. Health services in Israel. *Optometric weekly*. 1965;57:35-36.
3. Levenson A. Report from Israel. *IOOL Publication*, May 1979:22-25.
4. Practice of Optometry Law 5751-1991, Knesset Document No. 1363, July 1991.

## NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR REGIONAL DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE

The position of Regional Director-At-Large is up for election in 2010. Kara Heying, OD, FCOVD, was appointed in April 2009 to fill the vacated slot. The term expires this October at the 40th Annual Meeting. Please note that Dr. Heying has agreed to run for the position. As per our Constitution, Article IV, Election of Officers, Section 3a, “No Director may succeed themselves in office except for those designated to initial terms of less than three (3) years.” Since Dr. Heying’s initial term was less than three years, she is eligible to run for this position.

This will serve as official notice requesting members to submit nominations for the Regional Director-At-Large position. The Regional Director-At-Large represents all COVD members and serves a three-year term on the Board of Directors. Regional Directors play an important role in helping to develop and guide COVD programs and policies. Directors must attend

two Board meetings per year and participate in Board discussion and activities by email, and telephone between meetings.

Individuals nominated must be COVD Fellows who live within the region they represent. Any COVD member may submit a nomination, including a self-nomination. If you know a COVD Fellow who would be interested in contributing to the continued growth of COVD, encourage them to seek election to the Board of Directors.

Nominations should be **sent to** [info@covd.org](mailto:info@covd.org), or **by phoning 330-995-0718**.



Deadline for submission of  
nominations is April 16, 2010