

Editorial

The Hero

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Editor

[Luke:] I can't believe it.
[Yoda:] That is why you fail."

I recently took an online survey to find out what science fiction character represents my approach to life, the universe and everything. (Unlike what we learned in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Universe*, the answer was not 42.) Through the magic of the Internet and the wisdom of this survey, I discovered that I should now be Called Dr. Dominick "YODA" Maino! Being a somewhat short, round, Italian guy, I can understand the physical (if not metaphysical) resemblance. (I am not green nor are my ears pointed.)

Yoda is probably looked upon as a very unlikely hero (short, round, green with a funny way of speaking). Yet, he was an integral part of the Star Wars saga and helped to save the

universe. I'm not sure if I will ever have an opportunity to save the universe, but I do believe that the patients I help often make me feel that I may indeed have super-human powers.

I do know, however, that one of the unsung heroes of the StereoSue optometric vision therapy success story was the primary care optometrist who initially referred Sue Barry, PhD, to Theresa Ruggiero, OD, FCOVD, for treatment. I recently had an opportunity to talk to this unique optometric colleague and wanted to share with you parts of this conversation.

For the past five years, Dr. Steven Markow has been a primary care optometrist at Village Eye Care in South Hadley, MA. After graduating from the New England College of Optometry, he taught at NECO (optics, preceptor) and the College of Optometry at NOVA Southeastern University (low vision, preceptor). He also was at Bascom Palmer, as well as, a part of an MD/OD practice. Many of his educational, teaching, preceptoring and practice experiences emphasized the importance of referring those patients who required expertise beyond the scope of the primary care optometrist to another professional.

What was somewhat unusual was that Dr. Markow did not conduct a

single diagnostic procedure before referring "StereoSue" to COVD Fellow, Theresa Ruggiero. Sue had come into Steven's office to pick out a pair of spectacles and during the ensuing conversation; he found out that Sue had had a long standing vision problem. Unfortunately, this vision problem was not being addressed by her current eye doctor. As Steve noted during our phone conversation, "The ultimate diagnostic work up is when you just talk to the patient,"...and talk to the patient he did. He did the job of a true primary care optometrist. He took the time to find out about his patient and even recommended a course of action that lead to a major improvement in StereoSue's quality of life;¹ an article in *The New Yorker* magazine by a world famous neurologist;² and an interview on *National Public Radio (NPR)*.^{3,4}

Since many optometrists equate primary care with the diagnosis and treatment of pathology and seldom diagnose anomalies of the binocular vision system (let alone refer to their optometric colleagues),⁵ Dr. Steven Markow demonstrated how a true primary care optometrist should conduct him or herself. He completed the major portion of the ultimate diagnostic workup by talking (and listening) to his patient and then referring to a COVD member with the knowledge and

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clinical expertise to improve his patient's quality of life.

Dr. Steven Markow is a true hero who should be recognized by our profession as a model for primary care optometry to emulate. He listened. He cared. By using these simple but effective *super powers*, he rescued his patient from the super villains of Indifference and Ignorance. I would like to suggest that since he is indeed a hero, that we either schedule a Triumph (like they did in ancient Rome) or a ticker-tape parade down Main St. USA... if we can't do that... at least let him know how much you appreciate what he did the next time you see him. I know I will.

Unlike Luke of Star Wars fame, optometrists must believe that optometric vision therapy can help their patients.^{6,7} If they do this, they will not fail in their mission to truly provide comprehensive primary eye and vision care.

As always, I want your feedback and comments not only on this editorial, but on all we offer in every issue of the *OVD*. Please email your comments, praise (and yes, even criticism) to dmaino@ico.edu. After all, this is *your* journal.

Acknowledgement

I want to thank Dr. Len Press for pointing out to me that the true unsung hero of the StereoSue optometric vision therapy success story was the referring primary care optometrist.

References

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