

## Reflections: A Look at 2010

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*Editor*

Never before in the history of the College of Optometrists in Vision Development (COVD) have we had such an incredible convergence of events. This convergence of events has allowed us to share our vision, our mission and our dedication to making the lives of our patients and their families better. Never before have we had the opportunity to work with so many organizations within and without the profession of optometry that help us tell the public the importance of what we do. Never before has the public had the opportunity to tell our story in their words to thousands of families unfettered and unfiltered by the irrational biases of those who choose to oppose good, scientifically based patient care. These self-told stories time and again emphasize success, achievement, and accomplishment. These stories show how we improve the quality of the lives of our patients. Never before has the keen clinical insights and philosophy of developmental, behavioral and functional optometry been so strongly supported by research.

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## **The College of Optometrists in Vision Development and the American Optometric Association**

COVD and the American Optometric Association (AOA) now share one or more similar missions. We have joined forces, without the fanfare of letters of agreement or official announcements, to tell the public the importance of early intervention and single, clear, comfortable, pathology free, binocular vision. The American Optometric Association, in conjunction with the Vision Care Institute of Johnson & Johnson, has put infant eye and vision care at the forefront of public health care initiatives available to families in the United States. As you may know, the *InfantSEE*<sup>®</sup> program is a public health initiative, managed by Optometry's Charity<sup>™</sup> - The AOA Foundation. It is designed to ensure that eye and vision care becomes an integral part of infant

*wellness care to improve a child's quality of life. Under this program, AOA optometrists provide comprehensive eye and vision assessments for infants within the first year of life regardless of a family's income, access to insurance coverage or ability to pay.*<sup>1</sup> The COVD Fellows and Associates who are members of the AOA help to make this program the incredible success it is. One such COVD individual is Dr. Nathan Bonilla-Warford who made "Baby Day"<sup>2</sup> and the *InfantSEE*<sup>®</sup> program a national event. You can find additional information about the *InfantSEE*<sup>®</sup> program on Facebook,<sup>3</sup> in the *AOANews*,<sup>4</sup> on YouTube<sup>5</sup> and of course, within the pages of *Optometry & Vision Development*.<sup>6</sup>

COVD and the AOA have again informally joined together to bring the importance of good

vision to the American public by way of the many public information media pieces they have created concerning 3D movies, television, and videogames. Both COVD and the AOA have alerted the public to the potential detrimental effects that those with 3D Vision Syndrome<sup>7</sup> may experience when watching 3D content. The AOA chose two COVD Fellows, Dr. Len Press and me, to be the AOA spokesmen on this topic. We have been interviewed numerous times by various media professionals sharing the message of the 3Ds. This message is simply that “*If you experience Discomfort, Dizziness, or lack of Depth see your Doctor of Optometry*”. (Although I would like to take credit for such a great phrase, my friend and colleague, Dr. Len Press, thought of this first!)

COVD members should also know that many of the AOA news releases that went out to hundreds of media sources contained the following statement: *To find an optometrist in your area, or for additional information visit the AOA’s website at [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org) or the College of Optometrists in Vision Development website at [www.covd.org](http://www.covd.org).* In early October 2010 the AOA news releases alone had 1,682 media hits and more than 229 million media impressions! (Of course COVD has sent out several news releases on this topic generating thousands of hits and millions of media impressions as well.)

If you are a COVD member who is not a member of the American Optometric Association, now is the time to join. The AOA and COVD have much in common. As both organizations continue to learn about the other, we will discover additional synergistic mechanisms of cooperation so that our patients benefit.

### **COVD and OEPF, NORA, AAO**

The College of Optometrists in Vision Development and its members have been actively involved in programs offered by many other organizations. The International Congress of Behavioral Optometry<sup>8</sup> featured COVD members interacting with our OEPF and NORA brethren. At the American Academy of Optometry meeting<sup>9</sup> in San Francisco, COVD members presented posters,

research, and continuing education courses as well. In the near future you will be hearing about other ways all who are interested in and are a part of the functional, behavioral, and developmental optometric approach to patient care will come together for the mutual benefit of those we serve.

### **COVD and the 3D Entertainment-Techno-Industrial-Complex**

At this time the developers of 3D technology and content have not fully embraced using their enhanced entertainment creations as a public health screening tool for vision problems.<sup>10</sup> The 3D-entertainment-techno-industrial-complex as a whole is just now beginning to investigate how vision problems can affect those who wish to use their products. COVD members have been involved in working with the industry by serving as a “panel of experts” (Drs. Dominick Maino, Len Press, Maureen Powers, and Susan Barry) to the industry and as a resource for the The 3D@Home Consortium<sup>11</sup> (Maino). I have also been asked to participate in the Mommy Tech program at the Consumer Electronics Show<sup>12</sup> this January as a member of a panel featuring a number of major 3D TV manufacturers. Manufacturers and retail sellers of 3D televisions are also just now going beyond issuing warnings about vision problems associated with 3D viewing,<sup>13,14</sup> and are suggesting that its consumers go to the COVD website for information on 3D Vision Syndrome as well.

### **COVD and Research**

The research continues to support the diagnosis and management of functional, behavioral, developmental disorders and optometric vision therapy. We know that the change we observe in clinical signs occurs prior to the change in symptoms of those with convergence insufficiency.<sup>15</sup> Clinical trials and other studies have also noted that the positive outcomes of optometric vision therapy are long lasting,<sup>16</sup> that even severe amblyopia in older children can be treated,<sup>17</sup> and that modest interocular differences in refractive error can influence visual function<sup>18</sup>. Perceptual learning (vision therapy conducted by research scientists) for adults

“ *The 3D-entertainment-techno-industrial-complex ... is just now beginning to investigate how vision problems can affect those who wish to use their products.* ”

have also been shown to be particularly effective for those with amblyopia.<sup>19,20</sup>

It has yet again been shown that an analysis of the literature shows how little we know about the efficacy of vision screening<sup>21</sup> and that as noted in one paper, “*Population based preschool vision screening programmes cannot be sufficiently assessed by the literature currently available.*”<sup>22</sup> I continue to be mystified as to why our ophthalmologist colleagues do not support full, comprehensive eye and vision examinations for all our children. It is evident that little evidence-based medicine is available that supports the use of screenings.

Vision affects our motor performance, with one recent paper noting that “*Both sensory and motor fusion and good VA in both eyes are of benefit in the performance of fine motor skills tasks, with the presence of some binocular vision being beneficial compared with no fusion on certain sensorimotor tasks. This evidence supports the need to maximize fusion and VA outcomes.*”<sup>23</sup> Maximizing fusion is often one of the outcomes of optometric vision therapy. The various anomalies associated with learning related vision problems continues to be supported by the ophthalmologic literature as well as the optometric literature with one recent study noting that there was a high proportion of visual function anomalies in children with reading problems in an Austrian population. What they state confirms the importance of a full assessment of binocular vision function in order to detect and remedy these deficits to prevent the visual problems continuing to detrimentally affect the child’s educational development.<sup>24</sup>

In this issue of *Optometry & Vision Development*, you will read about the latest cutting edge research being conducted and presented at the annual College of Optometrists in Vision Development meetings. Did you know that therapy can normalize VEPs in clinical reading disabled populations or that reading speed and efficiency improve after optometric vision therapy? Other posters and papers presented noted that vergence stress affects reading rate, vision therapy improves symptoms and reading fluency, and that vision therapy in the work place not only helps the employee but the bottom line.<sup>25</sup>

## COVID and You

What is noted above is a small sample of what COVID has accomplished and how joint efforts by various organizations have made 2010 a year

highlighting the importance of functional, behavioral, and developmental optometry in the overall health care arena and in the lives of our patients. If you are reading this and are not a member of COVID, join now. If you are reading this and you are an associate member of COVID, but not a Fellow, apply for Fellowship now. If you are a COVID member, but do not belong to the AOA, OEPE, AAO, NORA and any number of other appropriate organizations, join now. If we are a part of these fine organizations, we can work from within to strengthen their understanding of what we do. That understanding will help us make 2011 even better.

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**Note:** URLs are functional hyperlinks to Internet addresses.

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## Corrections & Additions

The NewsMakers column in *OVD 41-3* only listed some of those in the National Academy of Practice.

It should be noted that COVD members who are **Emeritus and/or Honorary** members of the National Academy of Practice include: Ron G. Fair, OD; Nathan Flax, OD; Harold A. Solan, OD, MA; and John W. Streff, OD, DOS. Dr. Carl Gruning also noted that he was a member and that Dr. Bob Greenburg was Chair of the NAP Optometric Section.



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