



THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN OPTOMETRY IN B.C. ANNUAL REPORT 2008

MARCH 2008 TO MARCH 2009: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

This has been a momentous year for the Board of Examiners in Optometry. The year was consumed with our working with government and other stakeholders to formulate a new set of bylaws to govern a College of Optometrists. After hundreds of hours of work and many thousands of dollars, the repeal of the Optometrists Act occurred on March 1, 2009 and the College of Optometrists with its new Regulation was established under the Health Professions Act.

PERSONS SERVING THE BOARD

The Board of Examiners in Optometry is made up of six elected registrants and three appointed public members. The elected registrants are Dr. Gerald Komarnicky, Dr. Dale Dergousoff, Dr. Mario Pozza, Dr. Murray Hurlbert, Dr. Rebecca Counts and Dr. Michael Dennis. These elected registrants each serve a three-year term with the Chair being elected by the board members at the first meeting of the board following its election. The public members Mr. Al Jina, Mr. Thomas Beasley and Mr. David MacPherson are appointed by the Province of British Columbia and serve terms of different lengths. Mr. Jina resigned as of March 1, 2009 and a new public member, Ms. Barbara Buchanan was appointed. Following the establishment of the College of Optometrists the Honourable George Abbott appointed each of these persons to serve on the board of the College until the first election of the College.

The College is served by its Registrar Dr. Lawrence MacAulay and its Chief Administrative Officer Ms. Stanka Jovicevic. The staff includes Ms. Jela Vuksan and Ms. Amanda Eggins. The office did employ Ms. Chan Huynh and Ms. Emanuelle F. Selman for a brief period of time before Ms. Amanda Eggins joined our team. Furthermore, the College is also grateful for the part-time contributions of Ms. Tatjana Milacic.

It is anticipated that the College will be adding one more person to its office staff and consider having a Deputy Registrar as we move into 2009.

Furthermore, and as required under the HPA, the College is pleased to welcome five public representatives to serve on its committees: Mr. Brian Newlands, Mr. William Archibald, Mr. David Christie, Mr. Jeff Larcomb and Mr. John Corbett. We are also pleased to welcome Ms. Stephanie Lemon, Pharmacist, Dr. Simon Holland, Ophthalmologist (pending approval by the College of Physicians and Surgeons) and a yet to be named Ministry of Health appointee onto the Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee.

The College is also grateful to the many registrants who serve on its committees that protect the public.

REGISTRANTS

The College has 501 registrants. A jurisprudence examination is offered for new registrants twice a year. In 2008, the Board of Examiners welcomed 48 new registrants and saw 19 persons not renew their registration.

NEW OFFICE

The College of Optometrists moved from 1111 W. Hastings Street to 700 West Pender Street in Vancouver, on January 1, 2009. This move nearly doubled the square footage available to the staff and provided it was a more comfortable working environment that was more organized and able to accommodate the expanding staff requirements of the College. The physical presentation of the new office is also more in keeping with the professional nature of the College. A headlease was signed for term of five years and the College was able to obtain a subtenant to lease its former premises until the expiry of that lease in June 2009.

NEW MASTER SOFTWARE

The office staff has worked tirelessly to increase the efficiency of the College by integrating the Software Program to manage the registration and renewal functions of the College. It is hoped that the College of Optometrists will mirror other health profession Colleges in B.C. and achieve almost 100% compliance by its registrants within two years of integrating the software into the administrative aspects of the College. When compared to other optometry colleges throughout North America, the College of Optometrists in B.C. is the only College that annually reviews the credentials and continuing education of 100% of its registrants. This high standard will be easier to maintain with an integrated software program rather than reviewing paper files.

TILMA

The College of Optometrists in British Columbia was an early signatory to the TILMA agreement and continues to support its vision. We are pleased to work with government with this aspect of professional mobility and for the protection of the public.

AIT

The College of Optometrists is pleased to work with the government of British Columbia with its objective to be the first province in Canada to be compliant with the AIT initiative. The College of Optometrists will continue to work with the provincial government in this regard while following its mandate to protect the public.

HRO

The College regularly attends the quarterly meetings of the Health Regulatory Organization for B.C. This astute group of representatives from other health professions serves to voice common concerns and consolidate communications to government for the benefit of the Ministry of Health and for the members of this most wonderful forum.

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

In the fall of 2008 a motion was made at a meeting of the Board to consider a fresh perspective in legal guidance for the College. As a result, a majority vote by the board decided to acknowledge the contributions of Mr. Michael Hutchinson for his years of service to the Board of Examiners in Optometry and to move forward utilizing the advice of Mr. Gib van Ert and Hunter Litigations. By committee, the College has engaged a Victoria attorney Ms. Angie Westmacott to work with the Inquiry Committee.

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

As per the Regulation which was established under the HPA on March 1, 2009, the scope of practice for optometrists in British Columbia was expanded to include the treatment of eye disease using topical pharmaceutical agents and to allow for the removal of superficial corneal foreign bodies. The new scope of practice brings on a greater level of responsibility for the College to regulate its registrants who treat eye disease. The college has taken this responsibility seriously and will work through the Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee to ensure that the treatment of eye disease by registrants is being appropriately managed. In order to ensure public safety, the Standards, Limits and Conditions imposed on registrants in B.C. are stricter than in any other jurisdiction of North America.

FINANCES

The College maintains a sound financial standing in spite of its significant legal costs to produce the new bylaws, move into a new office, purchase new software, expand its staff and take on the responsibilities mandatory under the HPA. The financial burdens for the college after March 1, 2009 will be significant and it is anticipated that greater fees will be incurred by registrants in order for the college to fulfill its mandate.

DISCIPLINE

The Board of Examiners in Optometry managed 23 written complaints in 2008. A hearing was initiated but resolved through consensual resolution. Moving into 2009 and under the HPA, the College will have strict guidelines to respond to complaints in a timely fashion and will, through the Inquiry Committee, meet that responsibility. Although the College is prepared to go through the discipline process, it is our hope and goal that most every complaint be resolved through consensual resolution rather than through a discipline hearing. The College will initiate a program through its communication vehicle "*The Examiner*" to educate registrants about public complaints and how to avoid having a complaint registered against them.

COMMENT

This has been a wonderful and exciting year to serve on the Board and to help in its transition in becoming a College. As Chair, I am grateful to be surrounded by so many dedicated and hard working people who collectively act in the interest of the college and the public.

The public is well served.

Most sincerely,

THE COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRISTS OF BC

Gerald S. Komarnicky, B.Sc., O.D., F.A.A.O., Chair