

# EDITORIAL

## SHOOTING FROM THE HIP & LACK OF SCHOLARSHIP

In early 2004 we published a letter addressed to me by the Executive Vice President of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the President of the American Academy of Family Physicians.<sup>1</sup> The two physicians found great faults with an article we published about the effectiveness of vision examinations and vision screenings. The article was based on data and outcomes obtained as a result of the Kentucky law that mandates an optometric or ophthalmologic examination for all children first entering the school system.<sup>2</sup>

In my reply, I pointed out that the two physicians had either not read, or inadequately understood the parts of the article with which they took issue.<sup>3</sup> They also made several unsubstantiated statements, the most blatant of which was the insinuation that optometry and the Vision Council of America (VCA) are engaged in a conspiracy to foster glasses on the nation's children. Their letter to the editor is a classical example of "shooting from the hip" and a lack of scholarship.

An article<sup>4</sup> and editorial<sup>5</sup> in the publication of the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus (AAPOS) played a slightly different version of the same theme. The article reported that some 25% of children with normal eyes, who have had comprehensive vision examinations, may be prescribed glasses unnecessarily.

I felt an editorial in *JBO* was necessary.<sup>6</sup> In it I gave credit and documentation to what the editor of *Optometry*—*The Journal of the American Optometric Association*, Dr. Paul Freeman, had previously expressed; namely, that the study's criteria for prescribing glasses were based solely on amblyogenic factors. If these criteria were applied to clinical practice, children with, e.g., bilateral hyperopia or myopia of 1.25 diopters would be considered to have been prescribed ophthalmic lenses unnecessarily. I also pointed out that the AAPOS editorial insinuated that optometry and the VCA were in a national conspiracy to sell glasses because of a "corporate" mentality. No evidence to support this claim was given. I propose that the AAPOS editorial and article are further examples of ophthalmological "shooting from the hip" and lacking scholarship respectively. Indeed, I don't believe the editorial and article would have found their ways into any peer reviewed optometric journal.

A somewhat less critical ophthalmological editorial regarding optometry appeared this year in the *Archives of Ophthalmology*.<sup>7</sup> It commented on the report by the Convergence Insufficiency Treatment Trial Study Group that appeared in the same issue.<sup>8</sup> The study was conducted virtually exclusively by optometrists at six optometric

sites. It provided proof that vision therapy (VT)/ orthoptics is more effective in the treatment of convergence insufficiency than pencil push-ups or placebo VT/ orthoptics treatment.

The editorial complimented the researchers on the study's design and scientific treatment, yet raised some caveats.<sup>7</sup> The author, Dr. B.J. Kushner's concerns were based on his experience, anecdotal evidence and a small, admittedly unscientific study, he carried out in a remarkably short time. Dr. Kushner's piece "shoots from the hip" and certainly lacks the scholarship that should be expected in the editorial of a peer reviewed journal. Readers of the last issue of this journal will recall the guest editorial by Dr.

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*Irwin B. Suchoff, O.D., D.O.S.*

