

GUEST EDITORIAL

“WRITE SOMETHING”

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In many ways I still feel like a newcomer to the Optometric Extension Program (OEP) community. Although after 27 years, it might be time for me to accept my ‘senior’ status. I recently spent time on the phone with Drs. Amiel Francke and Al Sutton and consulted with Dr. Jimmy Tumblin on a history of OEP with emphasis on OEP Founder Dr. E.B. Alexander. Consequently, the status of ‘newcomer’ still feels correct to me. Working with these truly historic leaders of our professional community leads me to the thrust of this guest editorial, suggested by Dr. Maples after a brief conversation. The added duty of penning this editorial should teach me to keep opinions and observations to myself!

Have you ever wondered where the term “OEP Clinical Associates” came from? OEP does not really have ‘members’ as such. When you enroll in OEP, you become an Associate, Clinical Associate, Sustaining Associate, Student Associate or Faculty Associate. In the very early days of the OEP (pre-Foundation days), Dr. A.M. Skeffington did much of the writing for OEP, as well as his own data collection on both diagnosis and treatment techniques. As his responsibilities with OEP developed, he moved out of his practice in Kearney, Nebraska, where he had developed the concepts of the 21-point exam. (The 21 point examination had originally been 18 points.)¹ At the same time, “Skeff” was developing his model for the therapeutic use of lenses and vision therapy for those who could not accept the ‘safe lens.’ Because he was no longer in active clinical practice, Skeffington depended on oth-

ers in the OEP community to gather data, experiment with treatment techniques as well as to develop tests and instrumentation. As he traveled the country speaking at OEP Congresses and study groups, he received updates from the clinicians in the field. As a result, we began to see and hear the idea of “Skeffington and Associates.” This indicated that not everything OEP published was original to Skeffington. Rather, it represented an amalgamation of information gathered by many and fed to Skeffington to assimilate and disseminate to enrollees around the nation and world. Some of these Associates began to write and share their clinical experiences directly with the readers rather than through Skeffington. These writings developed into the *OEP Papers*. Most if not all of these writers had one characteristic in common: they were private practitioners. The natural evolution of these authors and the *OEP Papers* brought about the development of the *Journal of Behavioral Optometry (JBO)*. The *Journal’s* primary mission is to share information relating to the clinical practice of behavioral vision care. In our conversation, Dr. Maples expressed pleasure at having received a number of new manuscripts for possible articles in *JBO*. He mentioned a few by name and then said they were all from academic institutions. The *JBO* is getting very few submissions from private practitioners: one in Volume 20 so far this year; four in Volume 19 and five in Volume 18. The *JBO* needs more submissions from private practitioners.

Anyone who has ever written professionally knows that it is hard work! I recall

talking with Dr. Martin Birnbaum soon after the publication of his book, *Optometric Management of Nearpoint Vision Disorders*, in 1993.² He had devoted 10 years to finishing this significant contribution to the optometric literature. He had two thoughts upon seeing the book in print: “It’s done!” and “Never again!” He was primarily a private practitioner, however, Marty enjoyed a resource that most private practitioners do not. He had access to the State University of New York, State College of Optometry, its library, clinics and faculty, since he had duties both in didactic and clinical teaching. OEP has always been clinicians sharing with clinicians, veteran practitioners guiding those new to the profession or new to behavioral vision care. Those with experience and expertise in a given area should be writing, leading a study group or teaching those who want to gain new insights. The *JBO* is one of the primary vehicles OEP has for sharing information. Research is important and the profession needs quality research in our area of interest and expertise. We need to demonstrate the efficacy of behavioral optometric care to other professionals as well as consumers and the general public. The essence of behavioral vision care, however, happens in the offices and clinics of optometrists providing that care. Dr. Lou Hoffman once told me that every patient encounter is akin to a research project with an ‘n’ of 1. It is valid if the practitioner documents the therapeutic insights that led to the solution of the visual or perceptual problem.

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These “n=1” projects happen thousands of times every day, all over the world. Sharing your insights with your colleagues is a valid and valuable contribution to the profession. It is possible that your serendipitous discovery has happened in other practices. Your anecdotal experience may have been repeated numerous other times in other practices. Sharing your insights and experiences, like Dr. Rebecca Hutchins did earlier this year³ or Dr. Paul Harris did with the use of stopwatches to motivate vision therapy patients⁴ is valuable and greatly needed.

Every reader of this *Journal* has had experiences worthy of sharing with colleagues. It may be a brief therapy technique or a unique case report. Possible subjects abound. You may have presented a 10-minute paper at a forum in the past that 30 of your colleagues appreciated. There are probably another 1500 optometrists who did not attend that meeting and would likewise benefit from your insights.

I want to encourage, tempt and entice you, the *JBO* Reader, to submit an article to the *JBO*. One of the unique features of the *JBO* is that the the Editor-in-Chief and his Editorial Board will *assist* you in developing a publishable paper not just tell you how bad it is or why it cannot be published. Your clinical insight and expertise is valuable. To quote Dr. James Gregg, author of the OEP series *Wanted: Optometric Writers*, I restate the title of this editorial, “Write Something!”⁵

References

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