

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

COVD: Recapitulating 40 Years of Excellence

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Introduction

This year during the week of October 11, COVD will be celebrating our 40th year anniversary. It is fitting that our Annual Meeting this year in Puerto Rico provides an international flavor that attests to the global reach of our organization, mirroring our Cancun experience in 2003.

With this backdrop it is time to revisit key elements of our history, last updated in written form by COVD's first treasurer, and former President Dr. Robert Wold.¹ Dr. Wold's paper elaborated the history of our organization, based on an article he previously co-authored with Dr. Martin Kane.² On August 6, 1965, a group of California optometrists met to form the National Society for Vision and Perception Training (NSVPT), with membership limited to optometrists undergoing a Fellowship Board Certification Process. Two similar organizations, the National Optometric Society for Developmental Vision Care (NOSDVC) and the Southwest Developmental Vision Society (SWDVS) were formed in 1969 under the guidance of Drs. Raymond Lowry in Minnesota, and Nelson Greeman, Jr. in Texas, respectively, though they were membership rather than fellowship organizations.

In this age of social media it is difficult to conceive of the fact that these three organizations were autonomous and unaware of each other. That situation was rectified in 1970 when representatives

of the three groups met several times to discuss a unified national optometric organization. They reached out for support to the Institute of Behavioral Optometrists (IBO) in the Washington, D.C. area, as well as to other prominent optometrists. The NSVPT was represented principally by Drs. Wold, Donald Getz and Charles McQuarrie, Jr. Though many of our current members are familiar with the names of Drs. Getz and Wold through their involvement in our organization, Dr. McQuarrie is less of a household name though no less influential in our origins. He would go on to become President of the American Optometric Association.

Auspicious Beginnings

On the weekend of December 6, 1970, in San Antonio, Texas, representatives of the NSVPT, NOSDVC, and SWDVS met to select a unified Governing Board and Examination Board. Each Board would have members who represented various regions of the United States: West, North Central, Southwest, Midwest Northeast, and Southeast. The first President was Dr. Amorita Treganza, aided by Governing Board members Drs. Raymond Lowry, Robert Wold, Joyce Adema, Nelson Greeman Jr., Donald Getz, Jerome Kollofski, Eleanor Reckrey, Morton Schomer, Martin Cohen, and Harvey Brown. The first Chairman of the Examination Board was Dr. Ralph Schrock, aided by Drs. Robert Zwicky, Forrest Baber, Conrad Mazeski, Sidney Cohen, Harvey T. Brown, and Stanley Brown.

COVD was officially formed in March, 1971 when the Board of Directors met for the first time in Irving, Texas, and voted to hold its first meeting in October of that year in New Orleans, Louisiana. At the first meeting the Board approved the annual presentation of the G.N. Getman Award and the A.M. Skeffington Award, named after two luminaries in the field. The first recipient of the Getman Award for outstanding performance in providing behavioral vision care to the public was Dr. Homer Hendrickson,

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while the first recipient of the Skeffington Award, for outstanding writing, was Dr. Martin Kane.

The mission statement, as we would call it today, consisted of five ambitious goals for the nascent organization:

1. Establishing a body of practitioners who are knowledgeable in functional and developmental concepts of vision, who will ensure that the public will receive continually improving visual care.
2. Promoting, fostering and engaging in interdisciplinary cooperation.
3. Enabling members to maintain the highest standards of professional knowledge and competency.
4. Educating and encouraging optometrists to qualify for membership and fellowship in the College.
5. Certifying optometrists as skilled in this optometric specialty.

As you glance at these goals or purposes, you'll note three current topics in the profession about which our founding COVD leaders were prescient:

- a) Board Certification
- b) Maintenance of competency
- c) Functional and developmental vision as specialty care

COVD leaders were ahead of their time in other respects as well. One observation that stands out is the diversity of the original governing board. Two of its executive members 40 years ago, Dr. Amorita Treganza serving as President and Dr. Joyce Adema serving as Treasurer were females. After Drs. Lowry and Davis served as the second and third Presidents of the organization, Dr. Adema became COVD's fourth President in 1974.

Scholarly Growth and Organizational Networking

Aside from fellowship certification, an early centerpiece of the organization was its Journal. COVD adopted the quarterly publication of the Journal of Optometric Vision Therapy from the NSVPT. Dr. Robert Wold served as the inaugural editor, and Dr. Martin Kane assumed the role one year later. Reflecting the broader mission of the organization, the name of the Journal was changed to the *Journal of Optometric Vision Development (JOVD)* in 1975. In 1976 JOVD published its first *Annual Review of the Literature*, which would serve as

a highlight of the Journal in ensuing years, updating readership on a variety of topic areas. Subsequent to Dr. Kane, three editors have served the journal with distinction, Drs. James Bosse, Sidney Groffman and Dominick Maino. Under Dr. Maino's editorship, the name of the Journal was changed to *Optometry & Vision Development (OVD)* and issues beginning with the publication year 2004 are available online at www.covd.org.

In 1981, to maintain and extend the scholarly component of the journal, news and other information was jettisoned to a separate publication, *VISIONS*, published bi-monthly and containing the President's message as well as heritage and practice management pieces. The Journal continues to present its Award for Best Article of the Year at the Annual Meeting during the Awards Luncheon, a practice begun in 1989. In 1983, COVD stopped producing brochures for public education, deferring this role to its allied behavioral optometric organization, the Optometric Extension Program (OEP).

In the late 1980s COVD began to promote funding for research projects. Though not large in amount, these funds were instrumental in providing seed money for many research initiatives undertaken by optometric faculty in our field. Around this time, an association of optometric educators in vision development, led by Dr. Ira Bernstein, began to meet yearly at COVD's annual meeting. Research presentations and posters were gradually phased into the Annual Meeting program under the direction of Drs. Donald Getz, Michael Cron, and Gary Williams. In 1996 COVD joined the Partnership Foundation of ASCO (Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry) to help invest in the future of optometric education.

Under the leadership of Drs. Robert Greenburg and Robert Wold, COVD deepened its organizational connections. COVD members held numerous appointments with the structure of the American Optometric Association, and our mid-year board meetings were held at the site of the AOA's annual meeting. The American Academy of Optometry's Diplomate Program in Binocular Vision and Perception was initiated in 1972, around the same time that COVD evolved. Select individuals were influential in the early phases of both programs, most notably Drs. Nathan Flax, Louis Hoffman, William Ludlam, and Jack Richman. COVD established and maintained liaisons with OEP and other sister

organizations such as ACBO (the Australasian College of Behavioral Optometry), NORA (Neuro-Optometric Rehabilitation Association) and CSO (College of Syntonic Optometry).

Membership

Another lens, perhaps our most crucial one, through which the maturation of our organization can be viewed is our membership. The *raison d'être* of our organization remains the conferring of Fellowship. Reflecting the increased interest in developmental vision abroad, as well as the emphasis on certification, the original name of the National Examining Board (NEB) was changed to the International Examination and Certification Board (IECB). The mission of the International Examination and Certification Board is to evaluate and certify the advanced competency of optometrists and vision therapists in providing developmental vision and vision therapy services. COVD fellowship represents our profession's first recognized board certification process.

Throughout our history, the ratio of associate members to fellows has remained about 3:1, with the Fellow Emeritus category recognizing retired fellows.

As the Governing Board of COVD has been the vehicle for advancement of our organization, the IECB has been its lifeline. To present for Fellowship examination and certification, associate members must have at least 3 years of clinical practice experience in vision development and vision therapy and have been actively involved in the clinical diagnosis and management of vision therapy for at least two years. Candidates must also submit evidence of 100 hours of continuing education in developmental/behavioral vision care before taking the written examination. Graduates of accredited Residency programs in Pediatrics, Vision Therapy and Rehabilitation meet the requirement for 100 hours of CE and one year of practice. The IECB has evolved under the capable leadership of Drs. Carl Gruning, Carol Marusich, John Tassinari, WC Maples, Nancy Torgerson and Celia Hinrichs. Among other areas, the work done on our written examination in consultation with the NBEO helped our certification process gain wider recognition. Significant strides were made in the 21st century in adding the category of FCOVD-A, or academic fellow, and most recently FCOVD-I, or international fellow.

A unique and highly valued component of our organization is the membership represented

by COVTs, our Certified Optometric Vision Therapists. The name change that this segment of our membership underwent in the late 1990s was more than semantics. Originally designated as COVTTs, or therapy technicians, the esteem in which therapists are held was elevated by the work of Diana Ludlam, Linda Sanet and other influential therapists. COVTs are required to complete open book questions, a written examination, an oral interview, and are inducted yearly at our Annual Meeting Banquet alongside FCOVDs.

Student membership represents another vital category in our organization. In recognition of the fact that students are our future endowment, COVD offers Marge and Robert Wold SAFE Fund Travel Grants to help defer costs of student travel to our annual meeting. With the implementation of our "Tour de Optometry," students are increasingly exposed to COVD representatives and philosophy, stimulating them to join and come to our annual meeting. Key affiliate members round out our membership categories.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting remains our sole membership gathering, as it has been since the inception of the organization. The Board has traditionally planned our meeting site to rotate between East Coast, West Coast and Midwest regions of the United States and contiguous areas. The formula for the annual meeting has remained similar throughout the years, with Board Meetings and Examinations conducted prior to the start of continuing education. An opening night practice management meeting jointly sponsored with OEP is followed by a social gathering, setting the tone for a large family-like gathering. A major change occurred in the late 1990s with the addition of Applied Concepts Courses in Vision Therapy prior to the CE program, and the Annual Meeting itself was shortened by a day.

A highlight of the Annual Meeting is the Awards Luncheon, emceed for many years by the inimitable Dr. Don Getz, and more recently by Dr. Phil Bugaiski. It has retained its flavor as the pinnacle of camaraderie in our profession. Continuing education continues to be cutting edge, as Dr. Gary Williams has maintained the high standards set by Dr. Getz. Discussion groups and special interest meetings complement the more formal lecture hall presentations, as envisioned by our original meeting planners such as Dr. Arthur Heinsen.

The crown jewel of our annual meeting is our Dinner Banquet on Saturday evening. Nattily attired, our membership assembles for the Presidential address, swearing in of officers, and induction ceremonies for new FCOVDs and COVTs, followed by dancing and lots of hugs and kisses. This is a formula unchanged over the last 40 years, and one likely to endure for the next 40.

Location and Management

COVD literally began as a “Mom and Pop” operation in the garage of Marge and Bob Wold in Chula Vista, California. And what a phenomenal mom and pop they were! As the organization grew, we hired Dr. Robert Greenburg in 1990 to serve as the first Executive Director of COVD, though the office remained in Chula Vista. Dr. Greenburg helped guide Board deliberations, clarified the vision of the organization, and planned and conducted the annual meetings with aplomb. In a move to broaden inroads into the profession, COVD hired Dr. Steven Miller as our ED, moving our office into the AOA building in St. Louis as the century turned. Dr. Miller turned his attention to long-range planning, and served admirably during his tenure in that position.

In the year 2006, COVD marked another milestone in our development. Recognizing the need to broaden our management structure yet at the same time increase our efficiency, COVD hired Pam Happ and moved our offices to Aurora, Ohio. Ms. Happ together with her able assistant, Jackie Cencer, has excelled in facilitating our annual meeting to new levels of growth, and in administering our burgeoning fellowship process.

Through the years, various individuals have aided COVD in public outreach. Two key individuals deserving of mention for their pivotal roles are Dr. Lynn Hellerstein and Ms. Toni Bristol. With the collective community that comprises the College of Optometrists in Vision Development, we are poised for another 40 years of excellence.

References

1. Wold RM. COVD: The first 25 years. *J Optom Vis Devel* 1995;26(3): 177-189.
2. Kane M, Wold RM. COVD: 20 years of excellence. *J Optom Vis Devel* 1990;21(4):3-9.

Appendix I – COVD Presidents

Date	Name
1971-72	Amorita Treganza, OD
1972-73	Raymond Lowry, OD
1973-74	Morton Davis, OD
1974-75	Joyce Adema, OD
1975-76	Donald J. Getz, OD
1976-77	Donald Heyden, OD
1977-78	Ralph Schrock, OD.
1978-79	Joseph A. Viviano, OD
1979-81	James A. Blumenthal, OD
1981-82	F. Robert Ginsberg, OD
1982-84	Robert M. Greenburg, OD
1984-85	D. Gary Thomas, OD
1985-87	Robert B. Sanet, OD
1987-88	Tom D. Rose, OD
1988-89	Glen T. Steele, OD
1989-90	Steven A. Levin, OD
1990-91	Gary Etting, OD
1991-92	Bruce May, OD
1992-93	Neil W. Draisin, OD
1993-95	Gary J. Williams, OD
1995-96	Donald J. Janiuk, OD
1996-98	W.C. Maples, OD
1998-00	Carl F. Gruning, OD
2000-01	Robert M. Wold, OD
2001-02	Nancy G. Torgerson, OD
2002-04	Leonard J. Press, OD
2004-05	Lynn F. Hellerstein, OD
2005-07	Drusilla Grant, OD
2007-08	Dan Fortenbacher, OD
2008-09	Carol Lea Scott, OD
2009-10	Bradley E. Habermehl, OD

Appendix II – COVID Awards

G.N. Getman Award Recipients

1971 Homer Hendrickson, OD
1972 Charles McQuarrie, Sr., OD
1973 Robert Kraskin, OD
1974 George Crow, OD
1975 Amorita Treganza, OD
1976 Robert Johnson, OD
1977 Paul Lewis, OD
1978 Charles Drain, OD
1979 Bernard Saltysiak, OD
1980 Harris Prefontaine, OD
1981 John Streff, OD
1982 Richard Apell, OD
1983 David Dzik, OD
1984 Lois Bing, OD
1985 Tole Greenstein, OD
1986 Elliott Forrest, OD
1987 Harold Weiner, OD
1988 Mary Childress, OD
1989 Joyce Adema, OD
1990 Arthur C. Heinsen, Jr., OD
1991 George Slade, OD
1992 Nathan Flax, OD
1993 William Ludlam, OD
1994 Albert Sutton, OD
1995 Baxter Swartwout, OD
1996 Sidney Groffman, OD
1997 Martin Birnbaum, OD
1998 Harry Wachs, OD
1999 Robert B. Sanet, OD
2000 Robert M. Wold, OD
2001 Donald Getz, OD
2002 Paul Lederer, OD
2003 Morton Davis, OD
2004 Graham Peachy, OD
2005 Glen Steele, OD
2006 W.C. Maples, OD
2007 Harold Solan, OD
2008 Carl Hillier, OD
2009 Nancy Torgerson, OD
2010 Gary Etting, OD

A. M. Skeffington Award Recipients

1971 Martin Kane, OD
1972 William Lee, OD
1973 Tole Greenstein, OD
1974 Robert M. Wold, OD
1975 Arthur Heinsen, Jr., OD
1976 Amiel Francke, OD
1977 William Ludlam, OD
1978 (not awarded)
1979 Martin Birnbaum, OD
1980 Elliott Forrest, OD
1981 Lawrence Macdonald, OD
1982 Nathan Flax, OD
1983 Gerald Getman, OD
1984 Robert Kraskin, OD
1985 Israel Greenwald, OD
1986 Amorita Treganza, OD
1987 Daniel Woolf, OD
1988 Donald J. Getz, OD
1989 Albert A. Sutton, OD
1990 Harold Solan, OD
1991 Richard Apell, OD
1992 Leonard Press, OD
1993 Lou Hoffman, OD
1994 Harry Wachs, OD
1995 Sidney Groffman, OD
1996 James Bosse, OD
1997 John Streff, OD
1998 Jack Richman, OD
1999 Arnold Sherman, OD
2000 W. C. Maples, OD
2001 Albert L. Shankman, OD
2002 Mitchell Scheiman, OD
2003 Paul A. Harris, OD
2004 Eric Borsting, OD
2005 Irwin Suchoff, OD
2006 David Fitzgerald, OD
2007 Kenneth J. Ciuffreda, OD
2008 Susan Cotter, OD
2009 Dominick Maino, OD
2010 David A. Goss, OD

COVT of the Year Award

2001	Linda Sanet
2002	Diana Eastburn Ludlam
2003	Irene Wahlmeier
2004	Barbara Anderson
2005	Leeann Batten
2006	Tom Headline
2007	Lyna Dyson
2008	Diann Geisert
2009	Kathleen A. Rutland
2010	Matthew Privette

Journal Article of the Year

1988	Susan Mencarini, OD
1989	Ralph Garzia, OD
1990	Paul Lederer, OD
1991	Nathan Flax, OD
1992	W. C. Maples, OD
1993	William Ludlam, OD
1994	John Streff, OD
1995	Israel Greenwald, OD
1996	Elise Ciner, OD
1997	Kelly Frantz, OD
1998	Ralph Garzia, OD
1999	Harold Solan OD
2000	John Searfoss, OD
2001	Kelly Frantz, OD
2002	W.C. Maples, OD
2003	David Goss, OD
2004	David Goss, OD
2005	Garth Christenson, OD
2006	Yi Pang, PhD, OD
2007	John Tassinari, OD
2008	John Tassinari, OD
2009	Chris Chase, OD

President's Award

1975	Amorita Treganza, OD
1976	Emily Lyons
1978	Frank Beglau
1980	Morton Davis, OD
1981	Martin Kane, OD
1982	Elliott Forrest, OD
1983	Martin Kane, OD
1984	Robert M. Wold, OD
1986	Donald J. Getz, OD
	Donald Heyden, OD
1987	Robert Greenburg, OD
	Nathan Flax, OD
1988	Ron Bateman, OD
1989	Allen Cohen, OD
1990	Robert B. Sanet, OD
1991	Steven A. Levin, OD
1992	Gary J. Williams, OD
1993	Gary Etting, OD
1994	Carl F. Gruning, OD
1995	W. C. Maples, OD
	Nancy Torgerson, O.D
1996	Carl F. Gruning, OD
1997	Gary Williams, OD
	Dominick Maino, OD
1998	Marjie Thompson, COVT
	Parents Active for Vision Education
1999	Robert M. Wold, OD
	W. C. Maples, OD
2000	Carol E. Marusich, OD
2001	Michael Cron, OD
2002	Lynn Hellerstein, OD
2003	Toni Bristol
2004	Nancy Torgerson, OD
2005	Leonard Press, OD
2006	Lynn Hellerstein, OD
2007	Linda Sanet, COVT
2008	Toni Bristol
2009	Lynn Hellerstein, OD
2010	Come to Puerto Rico to find out!