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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Preventing history from repeating

For the past 10 years of my life I've felt incredibly fortunate to have been an AOA Board member, now serving as your president.

Throughout these 10 years one of my biggest privileges has been the process of learning about each aspect of our profession as a liaison to nearly every committee within the AOA. An honor that accompanies that learning process is getting to participate in many discussions with ODs who have been leaders throughout our profession's history.

With the current discussions about optometric board certification this spring, several voices from the past have called and written to remind me of historical conversations in our past as progress brought controversy and fear.

The leaders who were part of our optometric history at the front lines of change shared with me those historical conversations and outcomes in our profession's history where a vocal minority or even our own house of delegates made decisions that slowed the progress of our profession.

Even during those historical setbacks, those who looked forward trusted their knowledgeable leaders at the national and state level, making the tough decisions to look beyond the short-term downside and refocus on the future for our patients and our profession.

An example of not seeing the future was in 1938 when the AOA House of Delegates passed a resolution: "...with emphasis on the fact that optometry has no desire to

extend its practice to include any limited or other form of medical eye care."

The stories told to me by those who were around in the early 1960s related that optometry did not initially want to participate in the Medicare system that launched in 1965.

However, in 1967, realizing their error, the AOA House of Delegates went on record as wanting to be part of the Medicare system.

Unfortunately, because we were not part of the launch of that initial program, it took us 20 years to become full partici-

law, optometry is in mainstream health care in America.

Today optometry sits at the table to help frame the NEW and changing American health care system.

Trying to ensure optometry's full inclusion in the future has once again brought vocal opposition. Let's not repeat history because a vocal few haven't looked forward or fear the change that will be our catalyst into the future of total patient care.

Our leadership who sees the future does their best to position our profession for success by sharing the information

You should find total confidence in the team's findings because of the amount of time and effort they invested to ensure that optometry "gets it right" for our patients and our profession.

pants in the Medicare system.

Of course the transition into medical eye care with diagnostic and therapeutic pharmaceuticals flew in the face of the 1938 resolution and there were many within our profession vehemently opposed to our transition into medical eye care right up to the day of state legislature votes.

Fortunately, for the millions of patients, and our profession; state and AOA leaders did their homework and had a vision for the future in the 1960s, 1970s and beyond. They were bold and stood against the vocal opposition — and look where we are today as a profession: 37 years after Rhode Island's first diagnostic

and added wisdom with the majority.

The AOA Board and state leaders continue to do their homework to ensure that optometry will have full participation in the new quality-oriented, value-based healthcare that is being developed in America.

What a great time to be a member of your state association and the AOA in the age of information. Yet, I challenge everyone to do the necessary homework to provide informed feedback to your state leaders by reviewing the board certification materials that are posted on the AOA Web site: www.aoa.org/jbapt.xml.

Let's not get caught up in the negative hype that is being



Dr. Kehoe

fueled on the Internet.

The misinformation and personal opinions being expressed aren't substantiated by solid credible information.

I urge you to review the materials that have been developed by the Joint Board Certification Project Team.

Look at the facts both historical and current. You should find total confidence in the findings because of the amount of time and effort the team has invested in this project to ensure that optometry "gets it right" for our patients and our profession.

Value-based health care is the reality. The AOA Board and our state leaders realize that we may lose a few good members depending on the outcome of the vote on board certification, however, we should all be more concerned that as a profession we could be left out of the changing health care system or unable to participate at the full level with equal reimbursement as other board certified professionals.

PS: Don't forget to visit my blog: www.PetesAOABlog.com where you'll probably find some discussion about optometry's board certification proposal.

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