

Editorial

Fifty Years of Optometric Education: A Legacy of Learning

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This Fall issue celebrates the 50th anniversary of *The Journal of Optometric Education/Optometric Education*. For five decades this journal has advanced optometric education and served as a platform to foster collaboration, document innovation and advance pedagogy.

The first issue of *The Journal of Optometric Education* was published in Winter 1975. ASCO President Dr. William Baldwin indicated that the journal symbolized ASCO's commitment to "provide active national leadership in the quest to strengthen and improve optometric education." Topics published in the journal included the cost of optometric education, optometric educator training, clinical training and curriculum. These topics are still researched and discussed in today's *Optometric Education*. The inaugural editorial, "Why A Journal?", written by Dr. Norman E. Wallis, Editorial Council Chairman, addressed the impending changes in the profession of optometry, strides within schools and colleges of optometry to meet these changes, ASCO's responsibilities to the profession, individual responsibilities of students and faculty to advocate for the profession, unity within optometric education and the need for a mechanism to showcase the quality education that trains future optometrists. Although progress has been made in these areas, they still warrant discussion. The original purpose behind creating *Optometric Education* remains relevant today. Many milestones have been met over the years: we have expanded from 10 to 26 schools and colleges of optometry, technology has been integrated into optometric education and patient care, year-long optometry residencies were launched, accreditation standards were majorly revised, curriculum innovations have been introduced, and clinical training advancements have been made. As these milestones were met, *Optometric Education* documented the profession's commitment to advancing evidence-based practice and lifelong learning.

Optometric Education has served as a venue to showcase faculty contributions to optometric education, support faculty development, disseminate research and highlight faculty innovation. As optometry

transformed over the years into a primary healthcare profession, the journal supported and recorded its growth and development. Optometry and optometric education continues to evolve. *Optometric Education* will continue to serve as a platform for dialogue, collaboration and sharing. Public awareness of the profession of optometry, (ASCO's [Optometry Gives Me Life](#) campaign), quality and quantity of the optometry applicant pool, scope of practice, diversity within the profession, healthcare reimbursement, workforce shortages and access to care gaps remain challenges. Engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning will ultimately help us better serve our students and patients.

As optometric educators, we work together to embrace the opportunities that shape the future of the profession. There will be new and evolving trends in the upcoming years. Artificial intelligence (AI) applications including education, diagnostics and data analytics will likely influence the approach to patient care. Changing healthcare models incorporating telemedicine and remote care, scope expansion and global care warrant discussion. Discussions surrounding artificial intelligence ethics, curriculum innovation, clinical simulations and virtual reality will be ongoing. *Optometric Education* remains a resource to provide educators with innovative teaching models, evidence-based strategies and insights into emerging trends.

This 50th Anniversary issue celebrates the journal and the people who sustain it. Thank you to the authors, readers, reviewers and sponsors for your dedication and trust. Thank you to the past editors whose vision and leadership formed the foundation of the journal and guided us through the decades of change. As we look to the next 50 years, I invite your continued support of the journal and optometric education. Share your research, innovations, and your thoughts so that we can continue to collaborate and develop new ideas to advance the profession.

Optometric Education maintains its status as the only peer-reviewed journal dedicated solely to serving optometric education. Optometric educators hold a distinctive role because although we are subject matter experts, many of us lack formal pedagogical training. Nonetheless, we educate future optometrists with evolving needs in a changing professional landscape. When looking to what's in the future for *Optometric Education*, former editor Dr. Aurora Denial stated, "I hope it continues to expand the body of educational scholarship and remains the leading resource for evidence-based teaching in optometry. Its continued growth will ensure that future generations benefit from both rigorous research and innovative practices." *Optometric Education* will continue to support us in this journey.

Cheers to the next 50 years!

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