

P E N N S Y L V A N I A
S T A T E B O A R D O F
OPTOMETRY
N E W S L E T T E R

SPRING 2007



COMMONWEALTH
OF PENNSYLVANIA

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Secretary of the Commonwealth

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*Commissioner,
Bureau of Professional and
Occupational Affairs*

Mark Vessella
*Deputy Commissioner,
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Governor's Newsletter

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Governor Rendell on important issues facing Pennsylvania.

The Role of the Commissioner on the Board

By Basil Merenda, Commissioner, Bureau of Occupational and Professional Affairs

The Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs (BPOA) touches the lives of millions of Pennsylvanians each day. We protect the health, safety and welfare of the public from fraudulent and unethical practitioners by administering professional licensing to physicians and cosmetologists to accountants and funerals directors. In addition, the bureau provides administrative and legal support to 27 professional and occupational licensing boards and commissions.

As commissioner of the BPOA, I am responsible for administering the commonwealth's licensing boards, sitting as a voting member on disciplinary cases and policy matters for 25 of the 27 boards and signing all licenses issued by the BPOA.

My administrative duties include working with the deputy commissioner to make "the trains run on time." In BPOA's case, it means making sure license renewals, applications and inquiries are properly handled by our staff. It also involves making sure that, where appropriate, reciprocal licenses requested from out-of-state individuals are properly reviewed. BPOA is also required to conduct reviews of education programs for some boards.

My duties as a voting member on 25 of the 27 licensing boards are the same duties and obligations that the professional and public members have as part of their service on our licensure boards. I act as a judge, along with the other board members, on disciplinary hearings. I participate with the other board members in the drafting and enactment of regulations, rules and other policy initiatives. In addition, I have the responsibility of coordinating policy matters of all 27 boards for Governor Edward G. Rendell.

I truly believe the most important thing I can do for you is to provide you with professional service – and that is my goal.

When Governor Rendell appointed me BPOA commissioner, he told me to make BPOA and the commonwealth's 27 licensing boards more accessible, responsive and accountable to the legislature, the licensees and the public we are sworn to protect. My pledge to you is that I, as commissioner, am working to carry out Governor Rendell's charge with intelligence, vigor and effectiveness.

If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out and contact my office at any time.

Optometry Board



Left to Right: Dr. Robert Ginsburg; Susan Murray, Esq.; Dr. Denise Wilcox; Dr. Janet Summers; Racheline Sherron, Consumer Protection Member; Dr. James Grove; Dr. Paul Freeman; Dr. Janet Schwartz; Sabina Howell, Board Counsel; Mr. Eugene Sheffer, Public Member; and Dr. Steven Reto, outgoing Board Chairman is seated in front.

How to Report Contact Lens Problems

By Janet Schwartz, O.D.

Last spring, we witnessed the first recall of a contact lens solution that was implicated in serious corneal infections. Many of us are aware that contact lenses are still being dispensed without valid prescriptions with serious complications. As primary eye care practitioners, it is important that we are vigilant about reporting adverse reactions.

What rises to the level of a reportable event? The FDA says report it if you suspect that the use of a medical product may result in a condition which required medical or surgical intervention to preclude permanent impairment or damage to a patient.

To get a form on adverse contact lens reactions, visit www.fda.gov and enter MedWatch Online Reporting Form into the search area. You may also mail in a MedWatch form. Adverse reactions to contact lenses dispensed without a valid prescription should be reported to the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry. Visit the ARBO Web site at www.arbo.org for an easily accessible form for reporting.

We now know that this information can be extremely important in preserving the sight of our patients.

Right-to-Know Act and Home Addresses

The Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs is sensitive to its licensees' concerns about personal privacy. However, the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Act, 65 P.S. § 66.1, mandates release of information contained in a "public record" stored by that agency if a member of the public requests it.

The bureau wants you to know that it will take all reasonable steps to safeguard personal information contained in your licensure records. We realize that many of you use your home address on the licensure records maintained by the bureau. However, given the uncertainty over what the Right-to-Know Act requires, neither the bureau nor the board that issues your license can guarantee the confidentiality of the address shown on your licensing record. Therefore, we recommend that, if you have a personal security concern, you might want to consider what many of our licensees have already done: use a business address or box number as the official address on licensure records.

Also, with the License 2000 computer system, you may indicate to the board an address for release to the public that may be different from your home address.

To further protect your privacy and identity, the bureau will only accept a request to change a licensee's address if it is submitted in writing and includes the licensee's Social Security number, license number and the old and new addresses.

Board Changes

Farewell to Dr. Steven Reto and Dr. James Grove

The Board of Optometry members and board staff wish to sincerely thank Dr. Steven Reto (immediate past board chairman) and Dr. James Grove (immediate past vice chairman) for serving two successful terms. Their leadership skills and professionalism served the optometrist licensees and citizens of this commonwealth immensely. While they will be missed, we wish them success in their future endeavors!

Welcome to our New Board Member

Denise Thomas Wilcox, P.T., O.D., Ph.D., graduated in 1976 from the Medical College of Virginia with a degree in physical therapy. She completed a Ph.D. in anatomy in 1981 from West Virginia University Medical School. She earned her optometry degree in 1985 from the New England College of Optometry.

Dr. Wilcox practices low vision at the Bucks County Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Newtown. She is an active member in the Pennsylvania Optometric Association, serving on the Low Vision Rehabilitation Committee and is the past chair of the Quality Assessment and Improvement Committee.

Dr. Wilcox resides in Doylestown with her husband, David, and children Kate and Zachary.

Reminder...

Renew Your License Online

You are eligible to renew online if:

- You are currently in your license renewal period
- Your license is delinquent by no more than 30 days

First-time users need the following information:

- Pennsylvania License Number
- Registration Code
- Current mailing address
- Credit Card information
- E-mail address

Go to the Department's Web site at
www.dos.state.pa.us

Click on **RENEW a Professional License**
(www.myLicense.state.pa.us).

Then simply follow the instructions
to renew your license online.

2007 Tentative Meeting Dates

May 10
July 11

Sept. 12
Nov. 8

Disciplinary Actions

The following is a chronological listing of disciplinary actions taken by the board from March 2006 through Sept. 2006. Each entry includes the name, certificate or registration number (if any), and last known address of the respondent; the disciplinary sanction imposed; a brief description of the basis of the disciplinary sanction and the effective date of the disciplinary sanction. Every effort has been made to ensure that the following information is correct. However, this information should not be relied on without verification from the Prothonotary's Office of the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs. One may obtain verification of individual disciplinary action by writing or telephoning the Prothonotary's Office at P.O. Box 2649, Harrisburg, PA 17105-2649; (717) 772-2686. Please note that the names of persons listed below may be similar to the names of persons who have not been disciplined by the board.

Don H. Pettit, license no. **OE004140P** of Meadville, Crawford County, has agreed to the permanent voluntary surrender of his license. Pettit failed to submit proof of completion of a minimum of 30 hours of continuing education courses. (03-09-06)

Andrew M. Berman, license no. **OE004862P** of Dover, DE, had a reprimand placed on his board record. Berman failed to submit proof of completion of a minimum of 30 hours of approved continuing education courses. (05-11-06)

Vincent F. Zeplin, license no. **OE001532** of Harrisburg, Dauphin County, was assessed a \$1,000 civil penalty and ordered to complete 30 hours of continuing professional education credits. Zeplin failed to conform to the acceptable and prevailing standards of optometric practice in rendering professional service to a patient. (05-11-06)

Harry Harman, license no. **OE003802L**, of Newtown, Bucks County, was indefinitely suspended based on his failure to submit proof of completion of a minimum of 30 hours of continuing education. (05-16-06)

Malcolm G. Meyer, license no. **OE003319L**, of Washington County, was indefinitely suspended based on his failure to submit proof of completion of a minimum of 30 hours of continuing education. (05-22-06)

Daniel H. Messinger, license no. **OE003602L** of Rydal, Bucks County, was assessed \$3,000 civil penalty and agreed to the voluntary surrender of his license. Messinger aided or abetted an unlicensed individual in the unlicensed practice of optometry. (07-13-05)

Renee Ross, license no. **OE007552T**, of Mountain Top, Luzerne County, had her license reinstated to probationary status based on her having completed the terms of her suspension. (08-24-06)

Louis Robert Fish, license no. **OE008348P**, of Watertown, NY, was assessed a \$1,000 civil penalty for having failed to complete the required board-approved continuing education. (09-21-06)

Check www.dos.state.pa.us for updated disciplinary action reports.

UNETHICAL OR UNLICENSED ACTIVITY

If you believe the practice or service provided by a licensed professional to be unethical, below an acceptable standard or out of the scope of the profession; or if you are aware of unlicensed practice, please call the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs complaints hotline at:

In Pennsylvania: 1-800-822-2113
Out of State: 1-717-783-4854

A complaint form is available on the Department of State's Web site at
www.dos.state.pa.us

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Janet H. Schwartz, O.D.
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Eugene C. Sheffer, Public Member
Franklin, Venango County

Racheline Sherron
Bureau Of Consumer Protection
Office of Attorney General, Harrisburg

Denise T. Wilcox, O.D., Ph.D.
Doylestown, Bucks County

Basil L. Merenda
Commissioner, Bureau of Professional
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Sabina I. Howell Esquire
Board Counsel

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