

Editorial

The New Orthoptics

Welcome to the new Australian Orthoptic Journal, the official peer-reviewed scientific publication of the Orthoptic Association of Australia.

This being our first Editorial and indeed as the new Editors of the AOJ, we have paused to reflect on the purpose of our journal for our profession. It is important to revisit such a basic question given that once, certainly when the AOJ was first published in 1966 (and previously as the Transactions of the Orthoptic Association of Australia), the educational and scientific material that was available to members of our profession was much less than what we have access to today. In fact, little under two decades ago there were relatively few sub-specialty journals in the medical field of ophthalmology – for instance, there were none in strabismus, binocular vision etc. (our particular area of clinical and research interest) – but today there seems to be a plethora of sub-specialty journals, including a handful in strabismus and binocular vision. And of course there's the internet; information literally at our fingertips!

Yet, orthoptic journals continue to be published – there are ten around the world (three being English-language publications). All constantly face the challenges that ours does, but we keep on, we persevere. Why? Surely, it's not for the dozen or so papers that each provides us annually? Nor is it principally as a means to publish, since orthoptists' research is increasingly being published in peer-reviewed and Medline-indexed journals.

It is possible that we persevere because we consider a journal to be a diary, an ongoing measure or gauge. Our profession's journal can be considered to be the 'height chart' on the wall for our profession, a permanent record that chronicles our growth year after year, each volume after the other. If we can presume at least part truth in this, we will remind ourselves of how important our journal is to our profession and therefore how imperative it is to keep it going – to persevere. More so today, each volume that is published is indeed a credit to our profession given the 'competition' from not only the increased number of other journals in our field, but the fact that our clinical and research interests have diversified such that we seek to be part of the readership of other journals too. This reflects our profession's progress...

A volume of the AOJ 30 years ago contains a presidential address by Vivienne Gordon entitled, *Orthoptics – The Expanded Role*¹. An excerpt follows:

... "Orthoptists provide specialist services in the investigation and treatment of disorders of ocular motility... The expanded role includes visual field testing, glaucoma investigation techniques ...areas relating to applied electrophysiology and preventative visual screening. The orthoptist may also assist the ophthalmologist in the management of eye diseases which require special investigation... and in patient education and counselling"...

In 2007, some 30 years on, orthoptists continue to be involved in varied roles, but have also emerged as eye care practitioners who are developing workforce opportunities and are engaging in new models of eye care where orthoptists have pivotal co-management responsibilities for the betterment of patient care. This year also sees the legislative changes that allow orthoptists increased glasses prescribing rights in three states (VIC, SA and NSW). We look forward to being witness to this increase in scope of practice, in growth, and even more so to it being chronicled in the Australian Orthoptic Journal year after year.

Zoran Georgievski & Connie Koklanis

Department of Clinical Vision Sciences
La Trobe University

REFERENCES

1. Gordon VJ. Presidential address - 1977. Orthoptics - the expanded role. Aust Orthopt J 1977;15:3.