

EDITORIAL

WHAT VISION IS, AND WHAT IT IS FOR: AN OPINION

Editor's Note:

We received the following statement in the mail just after Jerry Getman died. I believe it is an accurate statement of his credo, developed over a lifetime of service to optometry and his patients. It is fitting that his final words appear as the first guest editorial in the Journal of Behavioral Optometry.

The more one cogitates about the unique human ability, universally identified as vision, the more one comes to some inescapable facts and some very obvious conclusions. The following is an exploration of these facts and conclusions.

Facts:

1. The neurophysiological structure of the "visual system" in the human gives it a prominence in the brain-body totality that certainly acts to assure it of a purpose and importance no other information processing system possesses or can demonstrate.
2. The observable integrations and surrogations the visual system achieves in its relationships to all other information processing systems provide it with a role of monitor and guide no other system achieves or demonstrates.
3. The field of opportunity for action, in which the visual system operates, of-

fers a breadth and depth of challenges no other information system enjoys.

4. The "measurable-qualifiable" influence that vision has upon the development of human intelligence gives it a priority among those processes and behaviors that raise the human to levels of performance no other being can achieve.

Conclusions:

1. The clinical discipline that has spent its formative years in the study and care of the human visual system has achieved appreciations and insights regarding vision no other discipline can approach. This discipline is optometry.
2. The optometric clinical activity and research have brought regimens of appraisal and guidance no other discipline has found, or understood.
3. The very unique understanding and appreciation for the judicious use and prescription of lenses and prisms give optometry clinical tools no other discipline has discovered.
4. All these components in the maturation of a clinical discipline have allowed the alert optometrist to gain perspectives of human behavior no other discipline has attained.
5. These perspectives have, in turn, allowed the interested, alert optometrist to play a very significant role in the personal development of those individuals seeking optometric vision care.

6. As one carefully, and thoughtfully, analyzes how the informed optometrist determines the best lens prescription, how the patient is to use this prescription, and what routines are utilized in the visual training program, it becomes apparent that what the optometrist does in this entire process is of much less significance than how the patient meets and explores the challenges presented.
7. Thus, it also becomes apparent that almost any clinical procedure that offers the visual system ways to operate more efficiently--with less consumption of energy--and more effectively--with new awarenesses of more appropriate performance in cultural demands--will result in gains measurable in many aspects of the individual's behavior.

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8. It is therefore reasonable to assume that whatever challenges the patient to explore and seek new visual experiences, visual appraisals and visual interpretations will extend, expand and enhance the visual system as the most prestigious of all information processing systems. Because vision inherently demonstrates such a major breadth of brain-body influence, it will also serve as the most prestigious influence on all human behavior.

9. All of this brings me to the following conclusion: It is time to evaluate the emphasis and path the profession has taken over the past number of years. Have we gone so far toward an emphasis on the diagnosis and treatment of pathology so that the majority of optometrists, and particularly the newer ones, pay little attention to the possibility of enhancing and bringing their patients to their ultimate levels of visual functioning? If so, then the price we have paid for an expanded scope of practice is too dear. Doesn't the most casual appraisal of the role that optometry can play give an overwhelming reason for optometry to cling to and expand its uniqueness and its potentials for becoming a clinical discipline no other such can begin to match?

GNG

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