

Editorial ▶ Q & A with the OEP President, Dr. Eric Ikeda

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1) Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Southern California in the City of Pasadena, home of the Rose Bowl and the annual New Year's parade, the Tournament of Roses Parade.

2) Why did you choose optometry as a profession?

In my early years, I was the only family member to wear glasses (since the 7th grade) and really didn't care about seeing the eye doctor, let alone becoming one. However, I enjoyed my science classes in high school and eventually wanted to pursue health care. So, I took another look at all the disciplines, including optometry. I volunteered at the Riverside Optometric Group while in college to learn more about optometry, and it was there that I was also introduced to vision therapy. I saw how it had an impact on patients' lives and decided at that moment that optometry was my passion.

3) Tell us about your practice.

Many years ago, I was invited to join a group practice with Drs. James Cox and Michael King in Bellflower. The practice provided primary care and vision therapy services. I was invited to join the group to take over the vision therapy service. I currently have two associates who provide low vision and vision therapy/vision rehabilitation services.

4) How did your journey into the world of vision rehabilitation begin?

I began my journey into vision rehabilitation when Dr. Cox had referred a brain injury patient for consultation and treatment. I had minimal experience working with this population, so I was urged to contact Dr. Vincent Vicci, who was NORA president. Dr. Vicci had helped me through the case and suggested that I attend the NORA meetings to learn more about vision rehabilitation.

5) What have been the highlights of your career so far?

Simply knowing the impact my care has had on the patients I serve is fulfilling. I have truly appreciated the confidence of so many colleagues, and physical medicine, rehabilitation physicians, neurologists, occupational therapists, and nurse case managers to give me the opportunity to be a vital part of the team of providers. I have also appreciated the opportunities to give back to the profession by serving in various capacities and to be recognized for my contributions.

6) How did you get involved with OEP and why?

I have been a Clinical Associate since the early 1990s and have enjoyed all the clinical education that OEP provided. At the congresses, I also met so many wonderful clinicians (Dr. Robyn Rakov, Dr. Beth Ballinger, Dr. Irwin Suchoff, and many more) who were eager and willing to share information that helped me to



learn and grow. Soon after I completed my term as NORA President, Mr. Bob Williams, the OEP Executive Director at the time and a fellow LA Dodger fan, approached my wife (also a fan) at one of the games to ask her if she would support me joining the OEP board. She understood my passion and agreed. I knew OEP was an integral part of behavioral optometric education, and it was an ideal transition to join this board.

7) How has your involvement with OEP changed throughout the years?

It has gradually evolved from attending various Regional Clinical Seminars, then transitioning as a leader with other organizations such as NORA to being an integral part of the OEP leadership. During my time on the board, I have learned so much about its history and vision.

8) Can you highlight some of the overarching themes of your time as president of OEP?

Although I have just begun as President (June 2018), I hope to:

- Achieve greater accountability and transparency for OEP,
- Create a more effective volunteer structure,
- Strive toward greater cooperation between our professional organizations,
- Experience growth in our Clinical Curriculum courses and Regional Congresses,
- Provide more opportunities for research.

9) Besides from optometry, what are your hobbies and passions?

Spending time with family and friends, freshwater and deep sea/tuna fishing, golfing and rooting for the Dodgers!