

VISION THERAPY IS GOING MAINSTREAM • BY TONI BRISTOL

Thanks to 3D TVs, movies, and video games, the media is more interested than ever in binocular vision and optometric vision therapy. The AOA is continuing their campaign regarding “The 3Ds of 3D Viewing,” which was coined last year by our own Drs. Leonard J. Press and Dominick M. Maino.

This past March, the AOA signed a memorandum of understanding with the 3-D@Home Consortium, a group of more than 50 companies, “to improve the understanding of 3-D/S3-D viewing as a safe and appropriate technology for all viewing audiences.” If you have not visited their joint website, you need to visit it today. You will see that not only is vision therapy featured, but there is a link to COVD at the bottom of the page: www.3deyehealth.org.

We have a lot of exciting plans for the August campaign this year, and expect it to get even more interest from the media thanks to the 3D campaign. Several press releases will be issued, so it is vital you take steps now to be sure you are ready as they are made available. Please review the following list and work out how you can take action:

1. Assign someone on your staff to be in charge of getting the press release out as soon as it is received. Ideally this person would also complete steps 2 through 11.
2. Make a list of all the newspapers in your immediate community and surrounding areas.
3. Either get a copy of each of these papers, or review them online.
4. Skim over each paper (especially the human interest, education and health sections) to find reporters who are writing articles similar to the stories you hear in your practice. For example: A story about a child who was struggling with some physical handicap and was helped by a local doctor; or, a student who was failing and is now succeeding because of vision therapy. When you find a story that is inspiring, write a note to the reporter thanking him/her for writing such an inspiring piece. Do not propose a story at this point. There will be time to follow-up later.
5. Make a list of these reporters. When you can't find a specific reporter that stands out, make a list of the editors AND their fax numbers and email addresses.
6. Make a list of all local TV and radio stations; including, if possible, their producers, fax numbers and email addresses.
7. Local reporters often prefer to write their own story interviewing local people. Reporters also work on their own time schedule. There are times when you may have less than 24 hours to make yourself and some patients available for an interview. So it is helpful if you can put together a list of patients

who would be willing to talk with the press and have their child featured in a TV news spot or in the local paper. Keep this list handy and updated so you can quickly find someone to be at your office at a moment's notice.

8. Be sure to download COVD's public information kit from the website and have it ready to give to the reporter or editor along with the press release. **Even if you have downloaded the kit before, be sure to download the current version.**
9. Most importantly, when the press release arrives you need to ACT right away and fax or email it to everyone on your list.
10. Follow-up with a call to the editors, producers and reporters, and ask “Did you get the materials I sent you?” Expect them to say they didn't see it or receive it and plan on re-sending it. Ask them if they prefer the release be sent by FAX or e-mail, and send it the preferred way. Follow-up again either later that day or the next day.
11. If they want to put a local spin on the story, you can suggest a patient or two and their parents. Mention that their experiences were similar to those described in the press release.

In addition, your state coordinator will be given materials to send to your Governor to request a proclamation. You can also submit the same materials to your Mayor. The value of a proclamation is it gives you another reason to contact your local press. If you need any additional help on this please contact the COVD office.

There is a lot more that can be done to fully take advantage of this observance, including spreading the word through social media. The goal of this article is to get you started. If you aren't sure what else to do or have any questions about implementing these suggestions, please feel free to email me at ToniBristol@ExpansionConsultants.com. Also, if you are not on the COVD email blast list, please email the COVD office immediately at info@covd.org and make sure you are on the list, as the press releases and other materials will be sent via email.

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