

A SPECIAL ACTION PLAN • BY TONI BRISTOL

This year we have had four press releases issued for our August campaign. Each one has a different purpose and a different target audience. These press releases are for you to distribute to patients, educators, professionals and the media. The one thing that I ask is that you also make sure your optometric colleagues are kept in the loop.

I have mentioned several times that we are nearing the tipping point. When we reach that point, we want to be sure ALL optometrists are familiar enough with binocular vision disorders and the value of optometric vision therapy that they refer appropriately. And, if there is no one near enough to their office, we want them inspired to bring optometric vision therapy to their communities.

I wrote an article a number of years ago which I think bears repeating as it is even more appropriate this year than ever before. I've updated it a bit and would appreciate it if you would take a moment, read it, and figure out how you can help.

Your Help Is Needed

Let's take a moment to dream about the future. Imagine that optometric vision therapy is a household term. Now imagine that every parent whose child needs VT is looking for help. The good news is that every year we are moving closer to this vision.

The question now becomes, "Who will service all these children?" The bottom line -- We need more optometrists providing vision therapy.

Why don't more doctors offer vision therapy? From my experience, the most common reasons are:

- Lack of familiarity with the miraculous results VT can achieve.
- Inadequate education on VT.
- The doctor doesn't know how to integrate VT into a busy primary care practice and gives up due to lack of time or other roadblocks.
- Others have convinced the doctor that "you can't make money" with VT so minimal time is spent developing a specialty practice.

The problems presented above are easily overcome with the proper education. However, from surveys I have done, I have found that the most common motivating factors behind starting a VT practice are:

- The doctor has first hand experience with vision therapy (they had vision therapy when they were younger, or when going thru optometry school); or,

- They saw the results of vision therapy firsthand (either through an externship at a vision therapy office or by referring patients and getting back very positive feedback).

The third best way to get more doctors interested in providing VT is to share your miraculous results. Remember when you made the decision to go into VT? Perhaps it was just the idea that you wanted more out of your career than, "Which is better, one or two?" Your colleagues are no different. If they aren't aware of the true benefits of VT, they'll never give it a second look.

With the annual meeting on the horizon, we have an excellent opportunity to spread the word to other ODs. If you are still in contact with any of your old classmates, please consider either calling them or sending them a letter which shares some of your VT Success Stories. You might also suggest they attend an Applied Concepts Course at the upcoming annual COVD meeting. Of course, this could be done with any OD you know who might be interested.

I know you are all very busy. But, I also know that you are dedicated to helping your patients and others who need this level of care.

What if you could help people you have never even seen? You can do this by getting other doctors started on the road to actively providing VT. Wouldn't it be great if we had enough doctors available to help all the people who need VT? Please help make this a reality.

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