



Canadian Société  
Ophthalmological canadienne  
Society d'ophtalmologie

EYE PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF CANADA | MÉDECINS ET CHIRURGIENS OPHTALMOLOGISTES DU CANADA

## **COS 2017 *Advocacy in Action* Update (Fourth Quarter Update)**

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- COS/Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) release joint Position Statement on *Effects of Electronic Screens on Children's Vision and Recommendations for Safe Use*
- COS/Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (EPSO) work to tackle the issue of sclera eye tattoos

### ***COS National Advocacy Initiatives***

**The New Advocacy and Public Awareness Fund:** As you may know, this year's COS annual Membership renewal portal has a new option. On September 18, 2017, the COS Board of Directors voted in favour of creating an Advocacy and Public Awareness Fund for each member to voluntarily contribute \$700.00 at the time of their membership renewal. Members who do contribute will receive a \$100 discount on their 2018 Annual Meeting registration fee. This decision came from the most recent [COS Membership Survey](#) that indicated that our members want more COS involvement in advocacy initiatives. The monies gathered from the Advocacy and Public Awareness Fund, along with a significant investment from the COS, will be used to support initiatives related to key Advocacy and Public Awareness priorities. These priorities include, but are not limited to, the continuation of *See The Possibilities* public awareness campaign, ongoing meetings with key contacts within the Federal government, an Advocacy Toolkit, developing and executing a Rapid Response Team for specific advocacy and lobbying issues that affect our provinces and sub-specialty societies, working with the Conference Board of Canada to produce a *Value of Ophthalmology* document, and much more. If you have not yet read the [Eye to Eye](#), President's Message, we urge you to do so, as it provides key background information for COS initiatives.



*It's not too late to make a minimum contribution of \$700.00 or more to the Advocacy and Public Awareness Fund. If you have not yet renewed your COS Annual Membership, we encourage you to do so through the online membership renewal form. We've also received a number of requests from our members enquiring about whether or not they can contribute a larger amount to the Advocacy and Public Awareness Fund beyond the minimum \$700.00 (in amounts of \$1000, \$1500, \$2000, \$2500, or \$5000+). If you would like to contribute a larger amount to the Fund, please contact Rita Afeltra at [rafeltra@cos-sco.ca](mailto:rafeltra@cos-sco.ca) or at: 613.729.6779 ext. 300 for details. By supporting this Fund, you're supporting the COS to continue its strong advocacy and public awareness work at a Federal level and empowering the provinces, subspecialty societies and academic community with advocacy tools, training and resources to help raise the profile of the profession. When we stand united, we have a more powerful voice on the issues that affect our profession and the state of eye and vision health in Canada.*

*Should you choose to contribute to the Fund, please indicate whether or not we can formally recognize your contribution on our website by listing your name. We can also list you as "Anonymous" if you prefer. Please give us your consent to do this by emailing Courtney Vaz, Coordinator, Communications and Public Affairs at: [cvaz@cos-sco.ca](mailto:cvaz@cos-sco.ca), or by letting Rita know when you contact her to give.*

**Year II of the See The Possibilities:** With great results seen in Year I, we have even more in store for 2018! Year II of the *See the Possibilities* campaign will include more patient stories, more social media engagement and more proactive media pitching around key disease awareness days (such as World Glaucoma Week, Diabetes Awareness Month, World Sight Day, etc.). In the meantime, please check out the latest patient video featuring adult strabismus patient, Laura Zepeda, as well as a national audio news release featuring eye trauma patient Jesse Tomlinson. Special thanks to Dr. Andrew Budning and Dr. Ron Baldassare for putting us in touch with Laura and Jesse respectively.

- [Laura's story](#)
- [Jesse's story](#) (EN only)

Please continue to visit [www.seethepossibilities.ca](http://www.seethepossibilities.ca) for regular updates.

**COS Plans Advocacy 101 Training Session:** COS is currently in the planning stages of an Advocacy 101 training session at the 2018 COS Annual Meeting. This training session will be for key physician leaders with an interest in advocacy who can become physician advocates in their own jurisdictions, subspecialty societies and for the academic community. The COS will also coordinate regional/provincial advocacy Train-the-Trainer sessions. The goal is to ensure that ophthalmology speaks as one united voice in Canada. This will help to position ophthalmology as the recognized medical and surgical leaders of the eye and vision health team to government, the media, the public and other medical and health care providers.

**COS Completes Advocacy Toolkit Phase 1: *How to work with Government*:** In addition to an Advocacy 101 training session, the COS is currently finalizing an Advocacy Toolkit. The Advocacy Toolkit will contain information on how to work with government, how to work with the media, and templated

materials that can be customized by individual provinces/sub-specialty societies. The first phase of the toolkit will be available in January 2018.

**COS Issues Management/Rapid Response Team:** On September 18, 2017, the COS Board approved the hiring of an additional COS staff person to serve as a Rapid Response Team member. This COS staff member with a background in Government Relations will handle specific issues affecting the provinces and sub-specialty societies, and support them with local government relations efforts as needed.

**COS works with CAEP and CAO to respond to fluorescein strip shortage:** On August 1, 2017, COS submitted a [joint response](#) from COS, CAEP and CAO to the Provincial Drug Shortage Task Force and Health Canada regarding the current fluorescein strip shortage. COS understands that the fluorescein strips, also known as Diofluor strips, which are produced by Dioptic Pharmaceuticals, are in shortage due to issues regarding re-classification (as a drug instead of a device) and the manufacturing process (a class 7 clean room cannot be guaranteed when cutting paper is involved). This shortage of fluorescein strips is further compounded by a concurrent shortage of fluorescein drops, which are produced by Bausch & Lomb (B&L). COS has been in touch with representatives from B&L and Dioptic since July. In September, COS received written confirmation that Health Canada was working with Dioptic on the implementation of Terms and Conditions to their Establishment License that would allow for the continued import and release of Diofluor strips, provided specific conditions are met. On November 29, Dioptic Pharmaceuticals confirmed that production of fluorescein strips is anticipated to resume in mid-December for availability in early 2018. To help address similar drug shortages in the future, or even discontinuation of drugs, COS has appointed Dr. Jamie Taylor to lead this work on behalf of the COS. Stay tuned for more updates as this evolves.

**COS continues work on Comprehensive Vision Rehab (CVR):** Physician leaders in CVR met in March 2017 and the group has produced an environmental scan of CVR services in Canada, including key recommendations. The COS Board approved these recommendations at its last meeting on November 4, 2017. It is recognized that Ophthalmology must play an active role in this space. In terms of next steps, the key deliverables are being mapped out to determine the resources that will be required to move this initiative forward. A very special thank you to Dr. W. Bruce Jackson for facilitating the development of the environmental scan and to Dr. Mark Bona for drafting the final recommendations.

### *COS Provincial/Sub-Specialty Advocacy Initiatives*

**COS Council on Advocacy:** The COS Council on Advocacy met via teleconference on October 19, 2017. The Council brings together an official representative from each province, the President of each sub-specialty society and the Chair of the Association of Canadian University Professors of Ophthalmology (ACUPO). Among the key discussion points were: The roll-out of the new Advocacy and Public Awareness Fund; the continuation of the *See The Possibilities* public awareness campaign; ongoing meetings with key contacts within the Federal government; an Advocacy Toolkit; an Advocacy 101 Session; regional Train-the-Trainer sessions; developing and executing a Rapid Response Team for specific advocacy and lobbying issues that affect our provinces and sub-specialty societies; working with the Conference Board of Canada to produce a *Value of Ophthalmology* document; and the development of a physician and patient media spokesperson list for proactive media relations efforts. The next Council on Advocacy teleconference will be held in January 2018.

**COS collaborates with CGS and CADTH and CGS on micro-invasive or minimally invasive glaucoma surgery (MIGS) consultation:** COS is continuing to support the Canadian Glaucoma Society (CGS) on a

widespread stakeholder consultation process by the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) regarding micro-invasive or minimally invasive glaucoma surgery (MIGS). In addition to key physician leaders from the CGS, CADTH is also interviewing representatives from the provincial eye physician and surgeon's associations, key clinicians and allied health professionals.

In parallel with the CADTH review, the COS and CGS have created a [Joint Position Statement](#) which represents the current position of the COS and CGS regarding MIGS. Both societies support new and innovative technologies within Ophthalmology and will continue to monitor this evolving area of practice and update this position paper accordingly.

Special thanks to Dr. Catherine Birt, Dr. Jamie Taylor, Dr. Hady Saheb, Dr. Cindy Hutnik from the CGS for their exceptional leadership on this front as their input and expertise are helping to inform this project. Thank you as well to Dr. Guillermo Rocha, Dr. Yvonne Buys and Dr. Colin Mann from the COS. CADTH considers the CGS and the COS as key stakeholders and as the recognized medical and surgical experts in this space.

**BCSEPS continues work on proposed cataract fee cuts:** BC Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons (BCSEPS) is continuing to work with the Tariff Committee of the Doctors of BC (BC Medical Association). COS has assisted in this process by sharing key information from the AAO to assist with negotiations. Special thanks to Dr. Dhar Dhanda, Dr. Briar Sexton, Dr. Chris Pollock and Melanie Ross for their dedicated work on this issue.

**EPSOM to consult with MB government on Presumed Consent for Organ Donation Bill:** On October 31, 2017, Dr. Guillermo Rocha and the Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba (EPSOM) liaised with Progressive Conservative (PC) MLA Reg Helwer regarding the government's rejection of a proposed Private Member's Bill that would have made all people in the province organ donors unless they specifically requested not to be (presumed consent) without any stakeholder consultation. After a phone call and letter sent by Dr. Rocha to MLA Helwer, as well as correspondence with NDP Opposition Leader, Andrew Swan, and additional pressure from other stakeholders, the PC government decided to form a Standing Committee to review organ and tissue donation in Manitoba. EPSOM has been invited to be part of the consultation process on this proposal in the new year.

**COS and EPSO Responds to Sclera Eye Tattooing:** On September 28, 2017 the story of Catt Gallinger, an Ottawa woman who suffered severe eye complications following a sclera tattoo, went viral. COS and EPSO responded to media interview requests from Global News National, CTV, CBC National, and Canadian Press regarding the case. Dr. Setareh Ziai of Ottawa, Ontario – the woman's ophthalmologist – acted as a spokesperson and provided her expert opinion to the media on this topic.

EPSO's Chair Dr. Jordan Cheskes and Past Chair Dr. Kylen McReelis wrote a letter to Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Eric Hoskins which was delivered to him on Saturday, September 30, 2017. COS coordinated discussions between Dr. Ziai and researchers for the Ontario government; educating them on the process of scleral tattooing.

On October 31, 2017, EPSO met with MPP Soo Wong and senior policy advisors for the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to discuss legislating eye tattoos in Ontario. On November 16, Dr. Cheskes and Dr. McReelis presented to the Standing Committee on General Governance at Queen's Park petitioning an amendment to Bill 160 which would prohibit an unregulated individual from performing

an eye tattoo or eye jewelry implant. The response to the petition was positive and unanimous. The amendment now sits with the committee awaiting final approval.

The COS is currently exploring the opportunity to develop Federal legislation banning the practice of sclera tattooing, which will be on the agendas for COS's meetings with key Federal government officials in the new year. In the meantime, congratulations to EPSO for successfully getting Bill 160 into second reading.

**Ophthalmology gains media coverage in the Eastern Township for a ground-breaking procedure:** Dr Mazen Choulakian, a corneal specialist, changed her patient's life after successfully implanting an artificial silicone iris - a first for the ophthalmologist practicing and teaching at Sherbrooke University. Read the full article here. [Read the full article here.](#)

### *Collaborations, Partnerships and the Joint Efforts of COS*

**COS and CAO release a joint Position Statement on the *Effects of Electronic Screens on Children's Vision and Recommendations for Safe Use.*** On November 4, 2017, the COS Board approved the joint COS and Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) position statement on the *Effects of Electronic Screens on Children's Vision and Recommendations for Safe Use*. This position statement was led by Dr. Christine Law of the COS and Dr. Zay Khan of the CAO and gives evidenced-based recommendations on the safe use of electronic screens for children. The COS also conducted media relations around the release of the joint Position Statement during *Digital Health Week*, resulting in interviews and articles in *Today's Parent*, *City Parent*, *Inside Toronto* and *680News Radio*. [To view the joint Position Statement here.](#)

**COS and CAO bi-annual meeting:** On November 5, 2017, key physician Leaders from the COS met with elected officials from the CAO to discuss potential areas of collaboration. Topics of discussion included an update on the joint Clinical Practice Guideline for the Periodic Eye Examination in Canada (0-5 years), Referral Pathways and delivery models of care by population growth.

**COS completes new diabetic retinopathy (DR) brochure for diabetes patients/GPs:** In November 2017, the COS successfully launched Ontario's new patient focused Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) patient brochure through the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) to all the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). This also includes over 7,000 brochures through the November issue of the *Canadian Journal of Ophthalmology (CJO)* to General Practitioner's with an interest in diabetes. The brochure was developed under the leadership of the COS, with collaboration from the Canadian Retina Society (CRS), the CAO, Diabetes Canada, EPSO, OTN, the Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and the Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB). Special thanks to Dr. Bernie Hurley (Chair), Dr. Tom Sheidow, Dr. Phil Hooper and Dr. Michael Brent. As a complementary initiative to the patient brochure, COS has a Mainpro+ certified CME program for family physicians that will be delivered across Canada in 2018. This CME program focusses on diagnosis, referral and encouraging on-going monitoring of patients with diabetes. Special thanks to Co-Chairs Dr. David Wong and Dr. Peter Lin (Family Physician) and planning committee members Dr. Bernard Hurley, Dr. David Maberley, Dr. John Axler, Dr. Carl Fournier (Family Physicians), and Dr. Alice Cheng (Endocrinologist) for all their efforts developing this CME program.

**COS and CDA wrap up Phase I of the *Sunglasses Project*:** The COS and the Canadian Dermatology Association's (CDA) joint Public Awareness Program *The Sunglasses Project* has concluded Phase I. In Phase I, we had 250+ social media posts, 12 unique articles and 5 published videos. We've reached over

20,000 consumers and had over 1,000 followers on our owned social media channels. We also had 324 article reads, 10 interviews and we had 34 press release pick-ups. Phase II will be rolled out in 2018. This program coincides with the new *Sun Protection for the Eyes* program. Currently, the COS and CDA will be coordinating meetings with several company prospects and promoting the Product Recognition Program through interviews with our physician panel experts in key trade publications, including *Optical Prism* magazine. For more information, please visit: [www.sunglassesproject.ca](http://www.sunglassesproject.ca). Special thanks to Dr. Harmeet Gill, Dr. Sam Markowitz and Dr. Setareh Ziai for all of their efforts on the Product Recognition Program Advisory Committee.

**COS continues to work closely with the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO):** COS has regular calls with key physician leaders from the AAO, including Dr. David Parke, Dr. Dan Briceland and Dr. Michael Brennan to discuss issues of importance, including Advocacy. COS is coordinating regular calls with the AAO in 2018. Also, COS Council on Advocacy representative Dr. Andrew Budning has been officially appointed as COS's Liaison to the AAO. He was invited to present on COS Advocacy Initiatives at the November 12, 2017 AAO Fall Council Meeting. COS would like to congratulate Dr. Ken Roberts for his acceptance into the AAO Leadership Development Program.

### *COS is Making Headlines*

**3.3 Million Media Impressions on World Sight Day:** For World Sight Day 2017, COS earned 3.3 million media impressions in one day, all with COS brand mention. COS spokespeople were featured on [Global News](#), [Live from Studio 5](#) and Kelly and Company (AMI). Special thanks to our physician media spokespeople Dr. Setareh Ziai and Dr. Phil Hooper.

**COS brand visibility continues to grow:** COS continues to increase its brand visibility through its Twitter handle, and through recent, top-tier media coverage including Global News, CTV, Canadian Press, CBC and AMI Media. Currently, we're working with *Optical Prism* magazine to publish a reoccurring feature on the *Innovations of Ophthalmology* in 2018. Please visit: <http://www.cos-sco.ca/advocacy-news/cos-in-the-news/> for a summary of all recent media coverage.

Sincerely,



Dr. Phil Hooper MD, FRCS(C)  
Chair, COS Council on Advocacy

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rosalind O'Connell', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rosalind O'Connell  
Manager, Communications and Public Affairs, COS