

Editorial

Welcome ABOard ABO!

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<https://doi.org/10.57204/001c.90900>

CRO (Clinical & Refractive Optometry) Journal

The American Board of Optometry's mission statement, "*to advance the quality of eye care by promoting excellence through education, assessment, practice and professionalism, for the benefit of all patients*" is clearly aligned with "*the core mission of the CRO Journal to present peer-reviewed articles that spotlight real-world cases alongside comprehensive topic reviews, providing valuable learning experiences.*" As an ABO Diplomate, I value my role as Editor in Chief of Clinical and Refractive Optometry (CRO) Journal in affording me the opportunity to guide peer education.

I, therefore, couldn't have been more pleased when recently ABO announced a collaboration with the CRO Journal, to provide ABO Diplomates with additional learning opportunities. The CRO Journal is generously providing ABO access to our articles as the basis for self-guided learning modules for my Diplomate colleagues.

Long before I gratefully accepted the responsibility of serving as Editor in Chief of CRO Journal, I decided to pursue Diplomate status in the American Board of Optometry. I had been in clinical practice for some thirty years at the time so the thought of studying for the lengthy comprehensive written clinical examination was daunting. My greater anxiety, however, came with the thoughts of having to take this test with rusty test-taking skills and the physical challenges of having to sit for such a protracted time.

So, who among my family and colleagues were championing my goals and cheering me on in my endeavors? Well, frankly, no one. At the time, this new concept of Board Certification was incredibly divisive (and still is, for that matter) within optometry. The mission of board certification was presented to the profession as a way to bring Optometry "up to the level" of other medical professionals in the eyes of both government and private credentialing bodies and third-party payors. The naysayers within the profession, however, including both academic and clinical colleagues, argue(d) that upon completing all parts of the NBEO exams, an individual who had been conferred the Doctor of Optometry degree was "duly board certified". They additionally pointed to the fact that board certification in other professions was to confer a specialty status and that optometrists, by definition, were specialists in the diagnosis and treatment of the visual system. Other ob-

jections surrounded the "political" involvement of select professional associations as well as the perception that it was just another way to extract fees and dues from already "stretched" professional budgets.

"What will it do for you?" Now *this* was to me, the *real* question. One which I was asked over and over again by colleagues, friends and family alike. And the truth is, that's the question that I asked myself. And, in the end, the answer mattered to me and only me.

Important to my vetting process was to understand the origin, "culture" and professional make-up of the ABO. I learned that it was conceived and founded in collaboration with, among others, organizations including the American Optometric Association and the American Academy of Optometry of which I had been a member for many years. The ABO had also achieved recognition and accreditation by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). At a more granular level, comprising the Board of Directors were well-respected educators, optometry college presidents and highly successful clinicians. I firmly believed, (and still do) that to maintain and grow optometry's recognition and status as a primary care, medically oriented profession, a national independent organization providing structured and purposeful continuing education and maintenance of certification was imperative. Thus, my "research" led me to conclude that ABO uniquely and creatively fulfilled this role.

Now, reflecting upon my decade as an active ABO Diplomate, I can honestly and openly answer the question: "What has ABO membership done for me?" First, preparing for the "qualifying examination" served to comprehensively refresh and renew my core scientific and clinical knowledge. And the fact that I successfully navigated the quintessential academic challenge of test-taking was incredibly rewarding.

Most importantly, as a Diplomate of the ABO, I have both enjoyed and professionally benefitted from its robust and engaging Maintenance of Certification pathway. And so, too, have my patients. And that, in the end, is what counts.

