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OPTOMETRY

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Volume 2 | Issue 1

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## Optometry's Contribution

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### Recommended Citation

Freeman PB. Optometry's Contribution. *Optometric Clinical Practice*. 2020; 2(1). doi: 10.37685/uiwlibraries.2575-7717.2.1.1033. <https://doi.org/10.37685/uiwlibraries.2575-7717.2.1.1033>

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## Optometry's Contribution

### Abstract

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

### Keywords

corona virus pandemic, quality of life

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## ***Letter from the Editor***



Paul B. Freeman, OD  
Editor-in-Chief

### Optometry's contribution

I had an editorial prepared for this issue but decided to change it due to my state's official stay at home order (AKA mandated retirement, hopefully temporary and short) based on the coronavirus pandemic. Having said that, I am of the age where glasses are necessary for me to function, especially for reading. Because I, as well as many, am sequestered at home, clear and comfortable vision in my constrained space has given me an enhanced appreciation for a phrase that is increasingly commonplace in the literature: *quality of life (QoL)*. I am now eye-to-eye with that. And, in fact, if you're reading this, unless you are a young emmetrope, or have the accommodative ability to push through your hyperopia, or are a myope, you can appreciate what I'm talking about. For example, I know that I can read without my glasses for about 10 or 15 minutes after which I become uncomfortable and frustrated. That frustration may well then carry over to anything else I might attempt to do or anyone with whom I would interact. Especially now, corrected vision that we so often take for granted can impact many of the options that we are left with in our confinement, i.e., watching television, reading, playing games, etc. And more broadly, as well, many of our heroic first-line defenders taking care of our sick, those who monitor our safety, and those who stock the shelves in our grocery stores can do their jobs more accurately, because we (and our ophthalmologic colleagues), in many cases, have provided the necessary and appropriate eyecare and eyewear.

There is, yet, another population struggling visually even more so, now that they are confined to their quarters, namely the visually impaired elderly who are poorly equipped to resist the virus at the heart of this pandemic. Imagine, if you will, not being able to see clearly and not having glasses to rectify that and, moreover, not being able to go out to do those things that otherwise might have enhanced some aspects of quality of life such as having coffee with friends, seeing family members (even if just electronically, which can be difficult for people with a visual impairment), or simply going shopping. Those of us who assess and treat these patients through low vision rehabilitative management appreciate the benefits we offer to these visually impaired individuals who can see, after our intervention, what was once considered out of visual reach, particularly now because they, like all of us, have to stay at home until this pandemic resolves. Thankfully, this intervention can help mitigate some of their visual challenges and frustrations. And,

although I am extremely sensitive to the impact of a visual impairment, the gravity of our current lifestyle situation has exponentially increased my appreciation of the impact of this loss, based on my recent experience. Immediately before circumstances changed, necessitating closing my office for an undetermined time, I had three visually impaired senior patients for whom I prescribed specific electronic devices, but who were going to be unable to get them for months. Because these patients already knew how to use these devices, I made the decision to personally deliver the devices to each of their homes, leaving them on the doorstep or with a family member- with appropriate social distancing. Phone calls that afternoon, the next day, and the following week, confirmed the importance of what we do for our patients. Each one could now read a newspaper, their mail, books, see their medications, view pictures, etc. And they were all even more grateful, knowing that that they now had a visual connection within their confined world.

I am sure that what I did was not unique and that many of you reading this have similar stories. It does, however, remind me that what we do truly enhances quality of life, whether it's to improve vision to 20/20 with conventional optics, or to help people stay in touch with their world visually through low vision management. I am thankful that I am part of a profession that allows us to help others to function visually, to do their jobs, and to enjoy most visual activities of daily living, all of which defines quality of life.

We will get to the other side of this pandemic. We should take solace in the fact that we, as optometrists, have contributed positively to the well-being of our patients in this most trying and uncharted time by minimizing visual isolation. Unfortunately, I don't believe that this editorial will be from an historic perspective as you read it, but rather will be the current state of affairs, which will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. I, as well as my family, wish everyone health and safety.