

ESSAY ON DR. JACK RICHMAN

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It is my pleasure to take on the “Blast from the Past” Challenge. This essay is near and dear to my heart because the influential person in optometry’s history is my grandfather, Jack Richman, O.D., FAAO, FCOVD. He is a pioneer in pediatric optometry, an author of many articles and books, an international speaker, a professor to thousands of optometry students, a creator of vision tests for children, cognitively impaired patients and those with brain insults, and he has also used his gifts in bringing vision testing to be used in the law enforcement community.

Dr. Richman began his optometric journey in 1964 by attending the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO) on a full academic scholarship. Upon graduation he became faculty at PCO and created the college’s first pediatric optometry program, the first pediatric residency program and was appointed the first chief of pediatric optometry services. In 1974, Dr. Richman became the youngest person in the country to earn a Diplomate in Binocular Vision from the American Academy of Optometry (AAO), an honor only six other doctors had done previously in the entire United States. In 1977, Dr. Richman brought his talents to the new Michigan College of Optometry (MCO) as chief of the pediatric optometry program. He finally returned back to the East Coast in 1982 as chief of pediatrics at the New England College of Optometry (NECO). There he remained for 26 years and branched out clinically and didactically in pediatric optometry, binocular vision, strabismus, visual perception, ocular motilities and vision rehabilitation services for brain-injured patients. During that same period, he was on clinical staff at several rehabilitation hospitals and clinics, educating optometrists, physiatrists, therapists and support staff. When completing his role at NECO, he received Professor Emeritus status in 2010.¹ His final academic position as professor and advisor took him to my optometry school at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, where he still visits as a guest speaker.

His contributions to optometry include designing the Broken Wheel Acuity Test and the first Landolt C standardized acuity for children and nonverbal patients. He then developed the Richman Face Dot Test, another standardized assessment for visual acuity in infants. His most influential contribution was the Developmental Eye Movement Test (DEM™), which measures an aspect of eye movement related to reading rather than purely parameters associated with eye movements.² He has published dozens of peer-reviewed articles on pediatric eye care, binocular vision, neuro-optometric rehabilitation and the effects of alcohol and drugs on the visual system. His work with the police community as a Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) includes him teaching and

publishing research in the area of eye movements and pupillary responses, which aids and supports the Standardized Field Sobriety Testing and DRE Testing. He is recognized as a national-level expert witness on horizontal gaze nystagmus, allowing states to have eye movement assessments included as law.

As if this wasn’t enough in contributing to the advancements of optometry in the United States, Dr. Richman has traveled outside the country to teach doctors and students in Spain, England, New Zealand, Australia, Israel, South Africa and Canada. His love for learning, teaching nationally and internationally, improving the quality of patients’ lives and also giving police officers the tools to keep our communities safe makes him my influential person to write about in the “Blast from the Past” Challenge!

My grandfather has instilled in me the importance of organized optometry and community service. He has been a member of the American Optometric Association since 1968, AAO since 1969, College of Optometrists in Vision Development (COVD) since 1972, and Neuro-Optometric Rehabilitation Association (NORA) since 1999. He also was a member of the Association of Suicidology, International Association of Chiefs of Police, and North America Brain Injury Society. Outside of his professional organizations, he was active with the Lions Club, The Samaritans and Safe House (Suicide Prevention–Crisis Intervention), hospice, elder services and served as a Hingham Police Physician.

The silver lining to my essay is that Dr. Richman does not live in the past; he continually teaches me, my father, Harvey Richman, O.D., my mother, Maria Richman, O.D., and his many students and colleagues who are constantly asking for his advice. He is still speaking and attending optometric and DRE conferences, still doing research and still being a wonderful grandfather, father, husband, teacher, professor, colleague and friend to many. This year, 2024, marks 60 years since the start of his optometric journey. Cheers to Dr. Jack Richman and cheers to optometry for being graced with his gifts for 60 years!

REFERENCES

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