

Bassi Studies Effects of Nicotine on Vision

Reprinted from the UM-St. Louis magazine, 1999. Article by Samara Campen.



Dr. Carl Bassi

Smoking is an unhealthy habit, but that doesn't mean nicotine itself doesn't have some medicinal properties.

Dr. Carl Bassi, associate professor of optometry, and George Taylor, professor of psychology, are collaborating on research looking into the effects of nicotine on

vision and learning. Taylor has done research on neurotransmitters and learning. Bassi covers the remaining bases with his experience in the optometry field.

Bassi said he was inspired to begin the study after working with Alzheimer's patients in a vision study.

"Alzheimer's causes damage to retinal cells," he said. "Then I saw that a paper had come out that indicated nicotine may enhance functioning of those cells."

Bassi and Taylor have been investigating the link between nicotine and enhanced vision for several months and were ready to begin using humans in their study in Summer of 1999. The subjects all will be current smokers and the nicotine used in the study will be

delivered in the form of chewing gum.

"We don't want to encourage people to smoke by any means," Bassi said.

Nicotine may prove to be beneficial to more than just vision, however. Bassi said that earlier research has shown that "people who smoke may actually be less likely to get Alzheimer's. This is because our brain has specific receptors to nicotine. It is exactly like a chemical produced by the brain."

Studies have also hinted at a link between nicotine and enhanced visual learning. Bassi and Taylor secured grants from the Missouri Alzheimer's Association and from the University of Missouri System to fund their research.

"Share the Vision" Program



Alexander Harris, Jr., O.D.



Debbie Kerber, O.D.

The "Share the Vision Program" for the St. Louis Optometric Society is off and running with the St. Louis Board of Education. Drs. Debbie Kerber and Alex Harris are working with Linda Reikes and Marcia Hayes-Harris, the Director and Assistant Director of Development

The "Sight for Students" program, administered through the St. Louis Board of Education in conjunction with Vision Service Plan has serviced 32 students this school year. These students have been seen by VSP doctors, most of whom have practices in the City of St. Louis.

The Community Services Committee which consists of Drs. Suzanne Hagan ('99), Buffy Mock ('99), Debbie Kerber ('92) and Alexander Harris met to discuss other projects we might undertake. "We would like to extend our services to the broader St. Louis Metropolitan area and will poll the membership in the near future for ideas," stated Dr. Alex Harris.

School Briefs

Alumni

Congratulations to the following alumni who earned Fellow status at the 1999 American Academy of Optometry meeting in December: Drs. **Mary Migneco** ('91), **Monica Harris** ('94), and **Paul Varner** ('96).

Faculty

Drs. **Gary Bachman** and **Carl Bassi** received a \$13,000 grant from the U.S. Air Force to study the role of color constancy and adaptation when using Laser Eye Protection Devices in the U.S. Air Force flying operations.

Dr. **Edward S. Bennett** published an article in the October 1999 issue of *Optometric Management* entitled "What Your Labs Know--That You Should Know, Too."

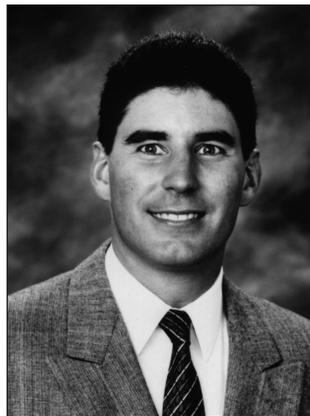
Congratulations are in order for Dr. **Edward Bennett** who has accepted the position as Faculty Coordinator for Student Affairs in the School of Optometry. (See Dean's column, p. 3)

Dr. **Larry Davis** was awarded "Outstanding Optometric Educator" for 1999 at the recent "EyeBall," an annual banquet organized and hosted by the students of the School of Optometry. He was selected to receive the award by Beta Sigma Kappa, the Optometric Honor Society.

The Collaborative Longitudinal Evaluation of Keratoconus (CLEK) Study has received an administrative extension in order to follow enrolled patients through August 31, 2004. The CLEK Study's purpose is to prospectively characterize vision, corneal changes, and patient quality of life findings in keratoconus and to determine the progression of changes occurring over time. The UM-St. Louis Center for Eye Care is one of 15 participating clinics across the United States. Dr. **Larry Davis** is the Principal Investigator, Drs. **Edward Bennett**, **Bruce Morgan** and **Beth**

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Seibel Elected to National Position



David B. Seibel, O.D.

David Seibel, O.D. ('87) is the first graduate of the School of Optometry to be elected to the national position of Executive Council of the American Optometric Association's Contact Lens Section. Dr. Seibel is the team eye doctor for the St. Louis Blues Hockey Club, the St. Louis Rams Football Team and the Mizzou Tigers Athletic Department. He is currently in private practice as partner of Vision Care Consultants in St. Louis.

Hart Named Clinical Faculty Member for Southern College of Optometry



Russell W. Hart, O.D.

Russell W. Hart, O.D. ('93) has been named an assistant professor at Southern College of Optometry. He will serve as a clinical faculty member in the Primary Care Service Area and teach Optometric Theory and Methods Lab I.

Previously, Dr. Hart was in private practice in Kansas for six years.

Dr. Hart earned his O.D. degree from the University of Missouri-St. Louis School of Optometry and a bachelor's degree from Kansas State University.

Professionally, he is affiliated with the American, Kansas and Tennessee Optometric Associations, as well as the Contact Lens Association of Ophthalmologists. Earlier this year, Dr. Hart received the Kansas Optometric Association (KOA) Meritorious Achievement Award. He is actively involved with the American Optometric Association's Contact Lens Section and is a member of Beta Sigma Kappa International Optometric Honor Society. In Kansas, he was involved with the Eyecare Council of Kansas and KOA-Political Action Committee. Additionally, Dr. Hart is an active volunteer for the American Cancer Society and frequently speaks on optometry to various civic groups.

Dr. **Robert Mobley**, Clinical Assistant Professor, is a fine example of how optometrists can serve their own communities as well as serve communities abroad.

On a recent trip to the Bahamas, Dr. Mobley was impressed with the friendly people in the Rotary Club of Freeport. He left Freeport with a challenge for the St. Charles Sunrise Rotary Club—to match

funds at the local, district and international levels in order to provide a desperately needed ultrasound machine for the local hospital in Freeport. By working together, the rotary clubs were able to donate a \$60,000 ultrasound machine to the Rand Memorial Hospital in Freeport, Bahamas. The hospital attends to the needs of the island community, most of whom do not have insurance.

Musings of the Dean

by Jack W. Bennett, O.D.

All educational institutions and many academic programs are subjected to periodic review and evaluation by outside agencies which results in their being accredited if they meet the standards established by the accrediting body. The University of Missouri-St. Louis is fully accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting body. The School of Optometry is accredited by the Council on Optometric Education (COE) and has begun the process of reaccreditation. This is rather important since every state licensing agency requires that the licensed applicant must have graduated from an accredited school or college of optometry. For the past several months nine study committees composed of faculty, staff and students have been involved in an exhaustive, introspective self study and evaluation designed to see how well the school conforms to the COE's standards. The reports of these nine committees were compiled into a single cohesive document and submitted to the COE in December. In early February a six person team of consultant evaluators will spend three days (Feb. 7-9, 2000) here on an evaluation site visit and will ultimately produce a report of their findings. Both our self study report and the COE visit report will contain many findings and recommendations which will serve to guide the school's planning and development in the next few years. I am appreciative of the significant efforts expended by all the faculty and many staff and students who served on these study committees.

I am pleased to report two new persons in the administrative structure of the school. In addition to his teaching and clinic assignments, Dr. Ed Bennett has assumed responsibility for student affairs activities as Faculty Coordinator of Student Affairs. Dr. Bennett was selected from five applicants for the position previously and ably held by Dr. Carl Bassi who asked to be relieved of the responsibility to devote more time to his research. This appointment, along with the imminent filling of a long vacant staff position bodes well for activities and functions in the Office of Student Affairs.

I am also pleased to report the acquisition, after a lengthy search, of a new development officer for the School of Optometry. As of November 15 Dr. Barbara Brown is the school's development officer. Dr. Brown got her undergraduate degree in chemistry and mathematics at UM-St. Louis and was a 1988 graduate of the UM-St. Louis School of Optometry. In addition to her 12 years of experience as an optometrist she has vast experience in fund raising and development in both the not-for-profit and the political sectors with a special emphasis in planned giving programs. We are looking for her to develop broad and effective programs that meet the needs of the school and our alumni and friends.

There are some exciting potential developments in the works at our clinics which when realized will provide some unique and meaningful experiences for our students' clinical education. I look forward to being able to inform you of these developments in future columns.

School Briefs

Henderson are co-investigators.

Dr. **Vinita Henry** and Dr. **Edward S. Bennett** have the second edition of their book "Clinical Manual of Contact Lenses" due out in early December, 1999.

Dr. **William Long** gave an invited lecture, "Teaching Optometry Students Physical Optics with the CBI Method," at the annual meeting of the Optical Society of America on October 30, 1999.

Staff

Welcome Dr. **Barbara Brown** ('88) who joins us as the new development officer for the School of Optometry. (See Dean's column, p. 3)

Faculty Personals

Dr. **Bruce Morgan** and his wife Dr. Mary Morgan are the proud parents of their second child, James Stewart. James was born in October 2, 1999. He joins his big sister Anna who will be three this year. Congratulations!

Alumni Personals

Dr. **Lisa Dibler** ('93) and her husband Lindsay are the proud parents of a baby girl, Lane Alexandra. She was born on September 3, 1999, and joins her big brother Luke. Good Luck!

Dr. **Terri (Franey) Reiger** ('97) and her husband Troy are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, Tristin Elizabeth. She was born on July 23, 1999 and weighed 6 lbs 7 oz. Terri practices optometry in Bloomington, IL.

Dr. **David Seibel** ('87), his wife Laura, and their two year old daughter, Lauren, happily announce the birth of Nicholas. Nicholas was born on August 1, 1999. Congratulations!



Happy New Year!

Calendar

- February 8**
SLOS Meeting

- February 11-12**
Heart of America Contact
Lenses and Primary Care Congress
Kansas City, MO

- March 14**
SLOS Meeting

- April 9**
Practice Management Univ.
Columbia, MO

- April 11**
SLOS Meeting

- June 21-25**
AOA congress
Las Vegas, NV

Heart of America

February 11-13, 2000
Hyatt Regency
Kansas City, MO

The 2000 Heart of America Congress will feature topics of interest to both optometrists and paraoptometric. They will cover contact lenses, primary care, diagnosis and treatment, special glaucoma courses and practice management, as well as technical seminars on the latest research and development.

Contact Dr. Gregory Joyce for information and registration, (316) 321-4020; fax, (316) 321-0115;
email Joyce@Southwind.net

See a complete list of all faculty and staff email addresses!



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