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PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY

Why it matters,
especially in the
service of Filipinos'
visual needs

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PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY

Jehan Zaragoza-Echavez, OD | PODS President

One of PODS' most ardent advocacies is professional autonomy, which has been variously defined as "the quality or state of being independent and self-directing, especially in making decisions, enabling professionals to exercise judgment as they see fit in performing their job."

(www.definitions.net)

We believe that protecting optometrists' professional autonomy will redound to their patients' benefit.

How? ODs should be guided primarily by what's in their patients' best interest and should not be distracted by extraneous considerations when rendering their services.

This means their professional judgment should not be overridden by business, financial and similar factors when they conflict with what, in the optometrists' professional judgment, is in the patient's best interest.

On the regulatory front, since it is the optometrist who has undergone training, obtained licensure and is the subject of strict regulation, he/she should be the one determining what's best for the patient.

Regulation and accountability would be thwarted if another unregulated entity is allowed to exercise this prerogative. In fact, in case of any violation of professional ethics or regulation, it will be the optometrist who will be subject to sanctions, not that other entity.

How is PODS advancing this advocacy? Primarily by supporting independent practitioners.

We presently provide training, mentorship and other resources to our members and prospective members that highlight the advantages of independent practice which we believe is the practice mode that best lends itself to professional autonomy.

We are also trying to effect legislative change by lobbying to prohibit the indirect practice of optometry. This is a long-term undertaking.

We are aware that this advocacy for professional autonomy will not be an easy one. Forces within and within the profession favor the status quo. But we are firm in our belief and resolve that for Philippine optometry to continue effectively serving the vision care needs of Filipinos, professional autonomy must be secured and enhanced.



Dr. Rheza Badon -Tabasuares, a PODS founding member, carries on a practice that epitomizes PODS' ideal of professional autonomy. She has been running her own clinic in Dumaguete City since 2013 and just moved into a new location in the city which will open in February 2022.

"As an independent practitioner, I am guided always by what is in my patients' best interest," states Doc Rheza. "I am happy I could practice my profession with no constraints that force me to compromise on this," she adds.

Doc Rheza spent an early part of her career being employed in an optical chain in Singapore." I am thankful for the experience of having worked outside the country as it broadened my professional horizon," she

states. "But it did not give me the personal and professional fulfillment that I now enjoy with my own practice," she adds.

Doc Rheza was the president of a national association of optometrist in the Philippines when it hosted an international conference of optometrists in Manila in 2019. More than 700 optometry practitioners, academics and students from around the world attended the event.

"I am honored to have been a part of the team that planned, organized and conducted that international event, the successful holding of which brought much honor to the Philippines," Doc Rheza states.

Doc Rheza regularly attends continuing professional development events hosted by PODS. "The knowledge I've gained by attending these events have been tremendously helpful in enhancing my ability to deliver quality vision



"I am happy I could practice my profession with no constraints that force me to compromise on this."

Dr. Rheza Badon-Tabasuares

care to my patients," she says. "It is important that I maintain a support network like PODS that advocates professional autonomy and helps independent practitioners like me. I encourage my colleagues to do the same."



Events

Join this free event and hear from experts in the field of myopia management as they share their insights into standards of care for myopia management and how they incorporate aspects of myopia management, such as mitigation, measurement and management, into their practices.

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WORLD COUNCIL OF OPTOMETRY
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Testimonials



Dr. Precious Zabierna
Cordero-Duan

As an independent practitioner, I value attending events that enhance my practice skills. This is what I experienced during the Binocular Vision series organized by PODS.

Since completing the Myopia Profile segment conducted by Dr. Kate Gifford, I have been slowly adding BV tests to my myopia management toolkit. Although the strabismus course by Dr. Vanessa Moodley required "double" effort on my part, I can now deal with this complicated vision problem with more confidence.

The insightful presentations and instructive materials made my participation in the BV series truly rewarding. It's never too late to get on the learning bandwagon as PODS is working on similar future offerings. All aboard!



Dr. Julius Alota

The Binocular Vision lecture & workshop organized by PODS has really provided me a deeper understanding about strabismus, including eccentric fixation and ARC. I am also learning the different tests and procedures that I can do to diagnose and manage this condition, some of which I thought I already knew.

This shed light to me on how much more there is to be learned, and that learning is lifelong. I thank PODS for this opportunity to learn and expand my clinical skills.

I would highly encourage my fellow optometrists to continue learning and enhancing their skills in practice in order to be competent in the field by joining workshops like these. Thank you, PODS!

