



**For Immediate Release**  
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**Optometric Physicians Ready for Drug Prescription Responsibility**  
*New President also installed at Optometric Physicians of Washington Annual Convention*

Nearly 550 members of the Optometric Physicians of Washington (OPW) took the first step toward prescribing oral medications at the association's annual convention in Seattle, Wash., March 10-13, 2004.

During the convention the OPW also named Karen Preston, O.D. as its new president.

Recent Senate Bill 5226 expanded the scope of practice for Washington optometric physicians to include the prescription of oral legend medications for the treatment of eye disease. This expanded scope of practice is designed to increase the convenience, quality of care, affordability and access to eye care both for caregivers and patients. Before Washington optometric physicians can prescribe these medications, however, they must first undergo 16 hours of instructional review with an additional eight hours of supervised clinical training. Upon completion of the Advanced Ocular Therapeutics course, optometric physicians must pass a competency test to prescribe narcotic analgesics and epinephrine for allergic anaphylactic reactions.

"Patients will no longer have to see an additional health care provider to get a prescription for an oral drug which should serve to increase the speed of healing for the patient who might need oral drugs (as well as eye drops) while decreasing cost and inconvenience of having to see multiple health care providers," said Dr. Rich Ryan, Past Chairperson for the Washington State Board of Optometry.

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### New OPW President Installed

Other business at the annual convention included the election of Karen Preston, O.D. of Redmond, Wash. as president of the OPW. As president, Preston will lead the OPW Board of Trustees, membership committees, staff, and general membership.

Preston has placed children's vision and the prevention of amblyopia, or "lazy eye," at the top of her agenda as president, and as co-chair of the Washington State Children's Vision Coalition she acts as the liaison between the OPW and other health care providers to improve detection of preventable vision loss in preschool children.

"I'm honored to be part of such a dynamic and talented team of people who come together so effectively for the purpose of improving vision and health, patient-by-patient, and in the community at large," said Preston, "I see the Optometric Physicians of Washington as my best professional and personal opportunity to give because it allows me to serve the public through my area of greatest expertise...vision."

Preston is in private practice in Redmond, Wash. focusing on pediatric optometry and strabismus. She performed undergraduate and graduate studies at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Ore., and received an O.D. degree from the Pacific University College of Optometry.

Through her many years of service, Preston was awarded a post-doctoral fellowship from the National Institute of Health, National Eye Institute and she conducted research at the University of Washington on the development of vision in infants. She assisted in the development of two important infant vision assessment devices and has been published in several professional journals and lectures widely on subjects pertaining to children's vision. Preston received the Bausch and Lomb Outstanding Achievement Award in Contact Lenses and the Alexander Skeffington Research Award.

*The Optometric Physicians of Washington (OPW) is the professional association of Washington State optometric physicians affiliated with the American Optometric Association. The OPW is comprised of 13 optometric societies throughout the state numbering approximately 600 optometric physicians.*

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