

Bringing Better Eye Care to Georgians

by

Maurice Zadeh, O.D.

If you followed the recent session of the Georgia General Assembly, you are well aware that it was among the longest sessions in history. It also featured some of the bitterest debates that many veteran political observers can remember. Most legislators, lobbyists and private citizens breathed a sigh of relief when the 40th legislative day finally drew to a close.

In spite of this rather rambunctious image of the 2007 legislative session, the members of the General Assembly did manage to pass several pieces of legislation that should prove to be of great benefit to many Georgia citizens. For example, Senate Bill 17, which passed overwhelmingly in both houses, will make it possible beginning this year for your family eye doctor to prescribe certain medications for the treatment of eye ailments and diseases. This will prevent many Georgia citizens from having to schedule a second appointment with a doctor of ophthalmology after their local doctor of optometry has diagnosed an eye illness or disease.

Georgia optometrists have possessed prescriptive authority for many years for narcotic medications such as Tylenol with Codeine and other medications to treat eye pain and disease. Senate Bill 17 simply expands the prescriptive authority for additional medications needed by the family optometrist to treat patients in a timely manner. This legislation gives Georgia optometrists the same prescriptive authority enjoyed by optometrists in 40 other states. What this will mean for many patients, especially those in rural areas, is that they will be able to have their eyes diagnosed and treated by their family eye doctor without having to drive many miles to have an ophthalmologist write a prescription for the drugs that the optometrist will now be able to prescribe.

Patients can be assured that their family eye doctors are well trained for the responsibility of prescribing topical eye medications. Doctors of Optometry sit in the same pharmaceutical classes attended by medical doctors, and more than 40 states in the union already allow optometrists the type of prescriptive authority we seek. Our members spend a minimum of four years following an undergraduate program studying the eye. This includes anatomy and physiology of the eye and entire body, along with intensive pharmacology training related to eye medications and how they react with the various systems of the body.

Thanks to the 2007 Georgia General Assembly, Senate Bill 17 will allow your family eye doctor to make it easier for you to keep your eyes healthy and your vision as good as it possibly can be.

Dr. Maurice Zadeh is president of the Georgia Optometric Association.