

2017 Annual Conference

Optometric Staff Program | Speaker Biographies

Alex Dar Santos

Alex graduated from UBC in 1996 with a B.Sc. in Biology followed by a B.Sc. in Pharmacy in 2002. He has 15 years of experience as a pharmacist and pharmacy management, and is the owner of a Shoppers Drug Mart in Richmond, BC. Alex joined the BCPhA Board of Directors in 2013 and was elected vice-president for the 2016/17 term. He is active in various charitable causes including the Shoppers Drug Mart Growing Women's Health Initiative, and the Ride Don't Hide Event in support of the Canadian Mental Health Association. Alex has been a Structured Practice Education Program (SPEP) preceptor for the past twelve years, where he helps train the next generation of pharmacists.

Alessandro Baronti

As a certified ABOC-NCLE speaker for levels 1 & 2 for issuance of continuing education credit for Luxottica, Alessandro provides education for thousands of eye care professionals every year. With almost 30 years of international experience, Alessandro began his career with Optyl Italia, until he was hired by Luxottica as an entry level Sales Consultant in the US. Three years later, Alessandro was tasked to be one of the sales consultants to help re-introduce Ray-Ban in the American market. Now, Alessandro is leading half of the US market in the position of VP sales for IECP and Education Department for the North American market.

Alison Leung, OD

Dr. Leung was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec. She is committed to providing the best care to her patients and is passionate about working with children with special needs, autism, learning related issues and traumatic brain injury. After completing her Bachelors of Science in Microbiology & Immunology and Psychology at McGill University, she went on to optometry school at University of Waterloo. She was the recipient of the COVD Award for Excellence in Vision Therapy and the Good Lite Pediatrics Award. Later, she completed her residency training in Chicago in Binocular Vision and Pediatrics Optometry. Dr. Leung also volunteers in her free time with TWECS and VOSH on eye care mission trips.

Brad McDougall, OD

Dr. McDougall has practiced in downtown Vancouver for the last 22 years, and is a principal partner at the Vancouver Block Optometrists on Granville Street. Dr. McDougall practices full scope, primary care optometry, with an emphasis in low vision. He is a clinical director with the national Special Olympic Games, and has a passion for traveling to areas in the developing world to provide eye care to those in need.

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Blair Lonsberry, OD, FAAO

Dr. Lonsberry is a Full Professor with Pacific University College of Optometry in Oregon. Dr. Lonsberry is a Diplomate of the American Board of Optometry, a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, the Optometric Retinal Society, the Optometric Glaucoma Society, and the Ocular Surface Society of Optometry. Dr. Lonsberry obtained his Optometry degree from the University of Waterloo in 1996 after completing a Master of Science in Physiology from the University of Manitoba. He completed his residency in Primary Care Optometry from the Illinois College of Optometry in 1997, then joined the faculty at Southern College of Optometry in Memphis, TN. During his time at SCO, he completed a Master's in Education degree with an emphasis in adult learning.

Boyd Godfrey

Boyd has over 30 years of dedicated experience working in the optical industry, and has worked with Carl Zeiss Vision for 19 years as a consultant to the ECP network in BC. He focuses on product sell-through and education, primarily for independent ECPs, demonstrating how businesses can differentiate themselves and provide a higher level of customer care and service in their competing marketplaces. Boyd has worked with many aspects of the wholesale laboratory side for ophthalmic lenses, including: sales, customer service, manufacturing, consulting, work-flows, software development and training.

Deborah Jones, OD, FC Optom (City, London), FAAO

Dr. Jones is a Clinical Professor, Interim Director and Continuing Education Chair at the School of Optometry and Vision Science, University of Waterloo. Debbie graduated in Optometry from City University in London, England. She is a fellow of the British College of Optometrists, holds a UK Diplomate in Contact Lens Practice and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry.

Don Ross

Don Ross is an enthusiastic speaker who enjoys providing eye care professionals in Canada with the tools to create positive patient experience. Don has worked in the optical industry for more than 20 years. Don is currently the Business Consultant for Essilor in BC and the Prairies where he works with optometrists and opticians to further enhance their business practices through product education and best practice solutions.

Don has worked as a dispenser for a national optical retailer, a local optical chain, an independent optometrist, and a nationally recognized independent optical boutique. He has an award-winning background as an account executive for two international frame manufacturers. Prior to his current role with Essilor, he was the Western Canadian Territory Manager for Transitions Optical. Don has a degree in communications, specializing in public relations, and held various marketing communications roles with federal and provincial government agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and a technology provider to the hospitality industry.

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Elaine Pedersen

Elaine is an accomplished speaker, who has given over 350 seminars to optometrists, optometric assistants and opticians across Canada and the US. She is the Training & Development Manager for Optometric Services Inc., Canada's largest buying and multi-service group for optometrists, and has developed numerous seminars and workshops on topics such as enhancing leadership skills, best hiring practices, marketing, customer service, sales skills, and how to improve team performance. Elaine recently completed her Masters of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University in June of 2016 and holds a Bachelor of Commerce, specializing in marketing from the University of British Columbia. Elaine is also a Chartered Professional in Human Resources and is certified to offer the Myers-Briggs personality instrument. She is also a Regional Account Manager for OSI. This position involves providing on-site training, coaching, and consulting services to OSI's members.

Jennifer Blackmon

Jennifer is an international speaker, who advises organizations on culture transformation and is dedicated to sharing her passion for the Ritz-Carlton business practices. She began her career in hospitality over 30 years ago and has now worked at The Ritz-Carlton for 20 years. While serving as Director of Catering and Conference Services, Jennifer's team was recognized as The Ritz-Carlton Regional Team of the Year. The team also held a top 10 ranking in the company for customer satisfaction for five consecutive years. Jennifer's strong belief in leadership through example and building trust in teams was once again demonstrated in her role as Director of Sales and Marketing. She not only led the hotel to its best financial performance since opening, but also achieved average scores of 99 percent for employee engagement for six consecutive years.

Julie Legendre

Julie Legendre has been a licensed Optician in Quebec since 1998. For the past 13 years she has worked with Nikon, and is currently in charge of training employees and the various accounts in Canada. She is also responsible for optical training for new employees and is a link between the optical market and Nikon's various departments such as sales, marketing and production. In addition, she is a speaker for continuing education seminars across Canada.

Kevin Parkinson, OD

Dr. Kevin Parkinson is from Vancouver, British Columbia, and received his undergraduate degree in Kinesiology from SFU and then his medical degree from UBC. For two years, he practiced family medicine before going on to complete an ophthalmology residency at the University of Western Ontario, followed by a glaucoma fellowship at the University of Florida in 1996. Since being admitted to the royal college in 1997, Dr. Parkinson has performed over 12,000 surgical procedures, and specialises in glaucoma and cataract surgery.

Maria Petruccelli

Maria is a licensed Optician and trained facilitator in the Productive Thinking method. She loves to problem solve. She has worked in the optical field for more than 25 years in all aspects from dispensing to sales and management. Working for Hoya since 2003, she progressed from sales management roles to Marketing and Professional Services Director in Canada. Maria recently made the move to Hoya headquarters in Dallas, Texas and is now the Director of Brand Marketing for the Americas.

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Mahnia Madan, OD, FAAO

Dr. Madan received her Doctor of Optometry from Pacific University in Portland, Oregon, where she graduated with distinction and received honors for clinical excellence. Following optometry school, Dr. Madan moved to Houston, Texas to complete her residency in ocular disease at the Eye Care Center of Texas. Dr. Madan is a fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and an examiner for the National Board of Examiners in Optometry. She is active on the lecture circuit and has lectured nationally on ocular disease management.

Melissa Barnett, OD, FAAO

Dr. Melissa Barnett is a Principal Optometrist at the UC Davis Eye Center in Sacramento. She is an internationally recognized key opinion leader, specializing in anterior segment disease and specialty contact lenses. Dr. Barnett lectures and publishes extensively on topics including dry eye, anterior segment disease, contact lenses and creating a healthy balance between work and home life for women in optometry. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, a Diplomate of the American Board of Certification in Medical Optometry (ABCMO) and serves on the Board of American Optometric Association (AOA) Cornea and Contact Lens Council, Women of Vision (WOV), Gas Permeable Lens Institute (GPLI), Ocular Surface Society of Optometry (OSSO) and serves as President of The Scleral Lens Education Society (SLS). Dr. Barnett is a spokesperson for the California Optometric Association and a guest lecturer for the STAPLE program. She was awarded The Theia Award for Excellence for mentoring by Women in Optometry (WO) in 2016.

Michelle McLeod

Michelle joined the optical industry in 1994, and became a Licensed Optician in 1997. Michelle has written a wide range of accredited seminars and delivered over 300 presentations in clinics and at five provincial OPTOFAIRS. Her dynamic experience allows her to bring knowledge of premium retail training and innovative solutions to her fun and informative seminars for BC's eye care professionals. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree with a specialty in Cell Biology and Genetics from the University of British Columbia. After years as a clinic manager, she joined Optometric Services Inc., Canada's largest buying and multi-service group, and holds the position of Western Regional Director and practice management consultant.

Mira Acs, OD

Dr. Mira Acs is a senior clinical optometrist and researcher at Toronto Eye Care, a full scope, primary care practice, including the use of therapeutic pharmaceutical agents. Her areas of practice interest include contact lenses, clinical research and researching new products and procedures. She graduated from the University of Waterloo and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, as well as the past president of both the Ontario Association of Optometrists and the Vision Institute of Canada. Dr. Acs is able to draw from her 30 years of experience in practice, the insight gained through her peer-to-peer meetings on practice management, as well as personal experience with wearing and fitting multifocal contact lenses.

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Nathan Whims

Nathan works for Eye Recommend training their members in BC and Manitoba. He has a passion for sharing his knowledge and experience with others, and helping staff provide the best experience for their patients. He has been a Licensed Optician for over 10 years and has experience in optical retail stores, labs, independent optometry offices. He also worked in the IT department of a national optometry company. Nathan has travelled to both Mexico and Honduras, providing training to local staff and helping those with no access to vision care.

Paul Neumann, OD

Dr. Paul Neumann is a strong supporter of industry and optometry collaboration to move the profession forward in both scope and practice. He also believes in empowerment and education for both doctors and staff alike. Committed to quality eye care, he is proud of his role as a board member of the Canadian Dry Eye Consensus Panel, former board member of Optometric Services Inc., and his involvement with the BC Doctors of Optometry. Dr. Neumann was the Association president from 2007-09 and received the President's Award in 2012. Dr. Neumann led the Optometry Liaison Committee with the Ministry of Health for many years and negotiations for the 2006-2012 agreement that initiated billing for TPA and recently the negotiated five-year agreement, 2014-2019. Dr. Paul Neumann was born and raised in Toronto and upon graduation from the University of Waterloo he moved to BC and started his private practice in 1995.

PEAK Emergency Response Training

PEAK is a Canadian and US based corporation that provides basic and advanced emergency medical response training and certification. PEAK instructors are all experienced pre-hospital care providers such as Paramedics, Critical Care Nurses, Lifeguards, etc. and have completed an extensive instructor training program. All of PEAK's programs are backed by a Medical Direction and Oversight Team of 9 BC licensed physicians.

Randy Kojima, FAAO, FBCLA, FSLs, FIAO

Randy Kojima is the Clinical Research and Development Director for Precision Technology based in Vancouver, British Columbia. He also serves as Research Scientist and Clinical Instructor at the Pacific University College of Optometry in Forest Grove, Oregon. Additionally, he is a clinical advisor to Medmont Instruments in Melbourne, Australia. Randy has published numerous articles and submitted posters on various contact lens related topics as well as been a contributing author in a number of text book chapters. He lectures globally and enjoys sharing insights, methods and research with eye care colleagues from around the world. Randy is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, the British Contact Lens Association, the Scleral Lens Education Society and the International Academy of Orthokeratology.

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Trudi Charest

Trudi Charest is the co-founder of 4ECPs, a business resource company for eye care professionals. She is an international speaker, author, industry consultant, and business innovator. Trudi is well known for designing, developing and facilitating training and marketing programs to eye care professionals across North America. She is a Licensed Optician with over 25 years of extensive eye care experience who also holds a Human Resource Management certificate from the University of Calgary. Her experience includes corporate training in retail optical, territory management for Bausch & Lomb, Clinical Consulting with Optos and VP of Training for Eye Recommend, one of Canada's leading Optometric buying groups.

Victor Pegado, MD, FRCSC

Dr. Pegado is a clinical instructor at the UBC Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science and the Island Medical Program in Victoria, BC. Not only does he perform most of the pediatric surgery on Vancouver Island, he also has hospital privileges with the Northern Health Authority where he provides surgical care for children and adults in Northern British Columbia. Dr. Pegado is both a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and board certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology. He is a member of the American Academy of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus.