

Perspectives, a VLRC Podcast

Episode 1 Transcript

Host: Jennifer Urosevic, President and CEO, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada

Guest: Dr. Allison Scott, President, Canadian Association of Optometrists

Narrator [00:01]

This is Perspectives, a VLRC podcast.

Dr. Allison Scott [00:05]

Myopia in children is increasing. It's predicted that myopia may affect 50% of the population by 2050.

[Theme music] [00:14]

Jennifer Urosevic [00:14]

I'm Jennifer Urosevic, President and CEO of Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada. I'll be joined today by Dr. Allison Scott, President of the Canadian Association of Optometrists. Today we'll talk about why eye exams matter even when your vision seems fine, the barriers Canadians face in accessing care, and what Canada's National Strategy for Eye Care could mean for the future.

Jennifer Urosevic [00:41]

All right. Welcome, Dr. Allison Scott from CAO, the Canadian Association of Optometrists. Excited to have you on our first podcast, really talking about the importance of your eyes. Can you kick off and share a little bit about yourself and your work with the CAO?

Dr. Allison Scott [00:59]

Well, thank you for having us. This is an exciting time and a great opportunity, so we really appreciate the invitation to speak with everyone today. As you said, I'm Dr. Allison Scott. I'm the President of the Canadian Association of Optometrists. The CAO represents over 6,000 optometrists across the country. One of our main focuses is to help educate Canadians about the importance of eye health and eye exams, and to help gain access for Canadians across the country, to make sure they can get access to care to look after their vision and their overall eye health.

Jennifer Urosevic [01:40]

That's amazing. I know you and I have worked really closely over the last few years as we have watched Canada implement and really talk about a national eye care strategy. We waited a long time for this to come. The National Eye Care Strategy was released by Health Canada in June. So tell us a little bit about what this strategy means to you and to the work that you do as optometrists.

Dr. Allison Scott [02:08]

The eye care strategy is exciting. It's exciting to have, here in Canada, a spotlight on the importance of eye care and the role that optometrists play as your primary care provider for eye health. A lot of people are unaware that 75% of vision loss is preventable, so getting routine care is important. A lot of times we hear, "Oh, I'll know a problem. I'll see a problem. My vision is fine. I don't need to get an eye exam." But so many things that we see can be detected before someone else sees them. I always tell my patients, my goal is to see it before you see it. I want to detect an issue or warning signs that something's coming, and get it treated before it ever impacts your sight and your day-to-day life. So to have the national strategy shine a spotlight on that is really, really exciting and very important for Canadians.

Jennifer Urosevic [03:06]

Absolutely. I couldn't agree more. For us, it's a really big deal that for the first time federally, the recognition of ensuring that rehabilitation and habilitation follow that diagnosis and that early detection, like you said, is really important. And if vision does impact your daily life, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada is there to help. You talked a little bit about the work that you do from a prevention perspective and getting in to see an eye doctor. Can you tell us a little bit more about what's involved in a comprehensive eye exam, and what people can expect from that?

Dr. Allison Scott [03:42]

A comprehensive eye exam is more than just looking at glasses or contact lenses. I think sometimes people think that if I don't need glasses, I don't need to go for an exam. But your comprehensive exam by your optometrist is going to include an eye health check. It's going to check the muscles around your eyes to make sure those are balanced and working well. They'll do a prescription check for glasses and for contact lenses. But it's really the overall health check, which might include photos of the back of your eye, or things like an OCT exam that looks at the detailed layers of the back of the eye. Those are important because they're there to detect disease. Not only eye disease, but sometimes other diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure, and even things like MS, might appear for someone for the first time.

Jennifer Urosevic [04:31]

I think that is so critical. Oftentimes people ask us how often somebody should go and see an optometrist. "I haven't been in years, but I can see fine," and stuff like that. I love that you talked a little bit about the overall health of the eye, and what other eye conditions or other health issues may be detected. I remember being at an appointment with a family member, and that is where they first detected diabetes. Although this family member hadn't been to see his family physician for a while, he ended up going then and getting onto a good plan. And so it prevented his vision from progressing to anything that would impact his daily life.

Dr. Allison Scott [05:14]

I think that's a great point. If you talk to any optometrist across the country, we'd all have stories similar to that. Someone came in for a routine exam, and they thought they might need new glasses, or they didn't think anything was going on, and we found some changes with diabetes. Sometimes it could be bleeding in the back of the eye, tiny little hemorrhages that actually won't impact your vision. Sometimes with high blood pressure, you can see changes in the blood vessels that would suggest that. I think it's surprising for those folks, and it's often hard to share that information when they thought they were coming in for new glasses and we find these other things. But then we work and collaborate with the primary care physician to make sure they're getting the care they need to get checked for those other conditions. And sometimes there's more. Like I said, MS can be one that can appear in the eye first. Sometimes brain tumors can show up in an eye exam. And even things like inflammatory disease. People will come in with a sore, red eye, and it could actually be a sign that there's inflammation happening elsewhere in the body. So the eyes really do show us a lot of things. That's why the national eye care strategy is so important, because our eye health and our eye care are such an important part of our overall health and our overall health care as well. We want to make sure that our eyes and vision aren't forgotten about.

Jennifer Urosevic [06:45]

Couldn't agree more. And I think that is really why, as the Vision Health Partners Coalition, which both of our organizations are members of, one of the first points of advocacy that we're really interested in the federal government taking a stand on is this prevention and early detection.

Dr. Allison Scott [07:04]

Yeah, I agree. I think there are still so many people who don't realize the importance of a routine eye exam. Or life happens, things get busy, we're looking

at other parts of our health care, and sometimes we can overlook or forget our eye care. So having the opportunity to educate Canadians on how eye care is an important part of our overall health care is a great opportunity.

Jennifer Urosevic [07:34]

Yeah. And you raised something. You said time. People don't always make time for this. What are some other barriers that you see Canadians face in getting regular eye exams? You said at the beginning of our conversation that there are about 6,000 optometrists across Canada. Do we have enough optometrists to meet the needs? What does that look like? And what are some of the barriers that you're seeing in the profession?

Dr. Allison Scott [08:01]

There are certain barriers that can be found in eye care in Canada, including coverage through someone's private insurance, and we are advocating for better coverage for people so that's not a barrier to accessing optometric services across the country. And while there are lots of optometrists in Canada, and you can find optometrists in small towns throughout the country, Canada is a really big space. So there are still some areas that might have longer wait times to see their eye care provider. And it might still be a barrier if you're not driving, that there might still be a distance you have to travel to access that care.

Jennifer Urosevic [08:45]

Yeah. And I think the rural reach is really, really hard. I know that right now there's only one English-speaking optometry school in Canada, and one French, and there's talk of some expansion. Do you want to tell us a little bit about the work of CAO and the schools in Canada?

Dr. Allison Scott [09:07]

As you mentioned, there's one school in Ontario where you can study optometry in English, and right now, 50% of Canadian optometrists are actually trained in the US. That can create other barriers and challenges. But there are some conversations happening about having two new schools in Canada, one in Alberta and one in New Brunswick. What that would do is give those Canadians who are going to the US the option of training at home, or closer to home. I grew up in a small town in Newfoundland. I practise in Nova Scotia now. I knew I wanted to be an optometrist. I decided I wanted to be an optometrist when I was 16, when I got to use a direct ophthalmoscope and see blood vessels in the back of someone's eye, and I was hooked ever since. It was always my goal. But if I'd had the option of staying closer to home, I probably would have taken it. I enjoyed my time in Waterloo. It's a fabulous school with a great education. But

especially if you're living rurally, sometimes people are not looking at optometry as an option if they want to stay close to home. So just having more opportunities for Canadians to train in Canada is really exciting, and I think that will hopefully help people who want to spend their career working rurally see optometry as a career.

Jennifer Urosevic [10:44]

I love that. One of the things I see in our workforce, and I know this is something we've all advocated for as part of this national strategy, is workforce capacity. You make a really good point. We always talk in health care about bringing care closer to people's homes to reduce the burden of travel, but from a workforce capacity piece, we have to do the exact same thing. If we want people to work in rural communities, we need to make the education pathways to do that more accessible, because it's a long time to be away from your community. Then life happens, and do people always come back to that community? So I think this opens up a lot of those doors, and I'm really excited to watch the progress that you have in that area.

Dr. Allison Scott [11:33]

Yeah, we're excited to see that progress as well, and I really hope those opportunities will be there. Certainly the national strategy is another way to highlight this and put the spotlight on the need for more schools of optometry in Canada.

Jennifer Urosevic [11:50]

Yeah, absolutely. So the national strategy was released when you first became President of CAO, if I recall from our earlier conversation. How has it been leading an association like CAO during such a historical time in eye care?

Dr. Allison Scott [12:09]

It's very exciting. It feels like this is such a big opportunity, and to be a part of that is really something very special. Anything we can do to help improve vision care and access to care for Canadians is so crucial. When we're looking at the national eye care strategy, it's then the implementation phase, and seeing the funding go into public education and new schools and other things like that. Once we see the strategy, and once it's been tabled, there's still a lot of other work that needs to be done, because we want to see these recommendations get implemented. I think you know that as well, and you're still working hard on this. It's not done now. The work will continue to build on what the strategy brings forward.

Jennifer Urosevic [13:03]

Yeah, I think the hard work is well ahead of us, continuing to hold governments accountable for this piece. But for the first time, I really point to this strategy as something that we can integrate into the provincial health associations and the health authorities. Vision care always seemed to be, I don't want to say an afterthought, but after other things, and not considered as part of and integrated into the whole health system. My hope is that this strategy helps to do that. And I think there's some really good language around positioning optometry as that first point of contact. You shared that around some of the early diagnosis of somebody's overall health, which is really important.

Dr. Allison Scott [13:50]

Yeah, thanks. And I agree. For those of us who work in the space, this is what we do day in, day out, so sometimes it's easy to forget that that isn't everyone's knowledge base. We know the impacts of vision loss and what that has on the Canadian workforce. So being able to prevent vision loss, keep people in their homes, keep people independent, and keep people in the workforce. These are all really important things when we look at the strategy, and maybe things that don't come first to mind for people when they think about vision care.

Jennifer Urosevic [14:30]

Yeah. The research shows that vision loss contributes to more falls. And I go back to the access and equity piece, knowing that optometrists are a little more accessible and don't necessarily have the long wait times of an ER facility. Where do you see the field of optometry playing a bigger role in the broader health system?

Dr. Allison Scott [14:58]

I think one of the things a lot of people don't realize about optometry is that we can do some emergency care. We can treat things like glaucoma. There's a lot of things that we can manage. So you're right. Seeing your optometrist if you have an eye infection, or seeing your optometrist if you got something in your eye, like a foreign body. Sometimes those folks are going to the emergency room, but if you call your optometrist, we can help with that. We can take care of that for you. A lot of optometrists across the country will see these emergency patients same day or next day. Similarly, if you're having any sort of sudden vision change, call your optometrist. We'll be happy to see you. And if you need a referral to an ophthalmologist, we will navigate that and help support that for the patient too. So there is a big role that optometrists can play in managing ocular health, and even those emergency appointments as well.

Jennifer Urosevic [15:59]

You shared an option there that really resonates with me. I remember a few years ago, my mom was in her backyard trimming plants and bushes, and she had a branch that got past her glasses and hurt her eye. It was pretty painful. Her first thought was, "Where do I go?" And she said, "I'm going to just call my optometrist." She regularly sees an optometrist, has worn glasses her entire life, and got in within an hour. I think back to that time, and how many Canadians actually think about it that way. I think that's so important, that there are options.

Dr. Allison Scott [16:44]

I would say one of the things we often hear is that patients are worried they might be wasting our time, that maybe this isn't important, maybe it'll heal on its own. My advice often is, I would rather see you and reassure you than wish you had come in. So for those times when you're thinking, "Is this important? Should I go?" Yes, you should. If you're unsure, call. Even if you come in with new floaters and it turns out it isn't something that requires treatment, at least we had it checked, and you can have the reassurance that you're okay. So don't be afraid to make those phone calls. That's what your health care team is there to do, to take care of you. I'd rather see someone and reassure them than wish they had come in.

Jennifer Urosevic [17:36]

Yeah, because you never know what could happen later on. So I think that's really important. And it leads to a question I've been really thinking about: what is next? What is the area of focus that we need to consider around this national eye care strategy? We know eye care is provincially funded. Is there something you think needs to be implemented as part of this national eye care strategy that will change something significantly for the next generation?

Dr. Allison Scott [18:12]

I think just education and awareness that your eye health is important and routine care is important. A lot of us are really good with getting our routine dental cleanings, so your routine eye exam, to make sure your eyes are healthy and everything is good, should be a part of that checklist as well. Similarly for our children. Kids are super resilient. Their assumption is that everyone else is seeing the world just like they're seeing the world. So kids are not good at telling us that they're having trouble, or that they're only seeing with one eye, or even that they're having a hard time seeing in school. So especially around children's vision, getting your child's eyes examined is really important. I think most people don't realize that a child's first eye exam should happen between six and nine months, then at the age of three, and then while they're in school, they should be

seen annually, because they grow and they change. Our vision is such a crucial part of how we learn that having a routine eye exam for our kids is really, really important. And also for adults too, right? We don't want to just assume, "Oh, well, this is probably a normal part of aging." And if there is vision loss, we can work together so that you can still get the supports and have access to rehabilitation and habilitation, the great work that Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada does. How all of that integrates together is so important, and I think a lot of people just don't know.

Jennifer Urosevic [19:53]

Yeah, and we've got to change people's perception on that. I know there are some great campaigns that CAO leads at different times throughout the year. You have a campaign called Get EyeWise. Can you tell us a little bit about it?

Dr. Allison Scott [20:10]

Yeah, that's our national campaign. Right now, it's focused on children's vision, and beware of the blur. Myopia in children is increasing, and we think that is probably linked to increased screen time and increased indoor time. So it's really about educating the public on the importance of getting your child's eyes examined. It's predicted that myopia may affect 50% of the population by 2050. And that doesn't mean just that you need glasses. Myopia is nearsightedness, so you have a hard time seeing far away. I myself am myopic, or nearsighted. But along with that, there are increased risks of certain eye conditions like glaucoma, cataracts and retinal detachment. So we can manage myopia early for a child. There are new devices, like glasses lenses, contact lenses and eye drops, that can actually slow down how fast kids change, which is really exciting. But even some early interventions are just trying to manage screen time and spending more time outside. So it's educating the public and parents that it's important for your kids to get outside. It's actually going to decrease their risk of myopia as they age, or even push back the onset of myopia if it's going to happen. Those small things can make a big difference.

Jennifer Urosevic [21:38]

I couldn't agree more. One of the campaigns of the Vision Health Partners Coalition, which I know CAO has been supporting as well, is around ensuring that every child across the country has an eye exam before they start school. How do we make that a little more available? I know it's available in every province and territory, but how do we really drive that message to parents? Children aren't the ones who are going to take themselves to see an optometrist. We've got October, and this podcast is launching on World Sight Day, so it's a great way for us to really focus on the prevention of blindness and low vision.

Let's talk about how we help parents understand how critical vision is in their child's development and their child's learning through those years.

Dr. Allison Scott [22:35]

I think it's just continuing to educate, getting the information out there, and having it built into the processes that parents have, whether it's the information they get from the pediatrician or from other health care providers. I think it's being collaborative, so that everyone is aware of the importance of this. So if you're seeing your general practitioner, or anyone else on the health care team, there's information available, and it's part of the things they're asking parents about.

Jennifer Urosevic [23:12]

Yeah, I agree with you. I think education, and then being aware. We've got a lot of great educators out there who notice things when they're teaching, like a child squinting. I'm going to share another story, because I love to connect these messages to my family and what's happening. My daughter is a basketball player and a university student at McMaster. Last year, her basketball coach noticed that as she was shooting the basketball from further out, she was sometimes squinting, or there was just something different in her eyes. She wears glasses. She is myopic, and she didn't think there was really a change. She hadn't really paid attention to it, and had just gotten her new glasses within the year. So she called her optometrist, and the office said, "You're not due for another year." And she said, "I think something has changed." She went in, and sure enough, her prescription had changed significantly enough to make that change. Luckily, we have good insurance, so there's not the financial barrier there. But I thought it was a really interesting awareness moment. I tell people that a lot when I'm talking about the importance of getting your eyes checked. Even when you go regularly, really pay attention to how you're seeing, and if things start to look a little bit different, what does that feel like? Because to your point, prevention is our number one defence.

Dr. Allison Scott [24:37]

We see that for sure. Sometimes our educators will encourage children to come in for an exam because it seems like they're struggling at school, or they're squinting in class. But even just having your routine care, and trying to build that into back to school, right? We're just getting through back to school right now, so making your children's eye exam part of that process is important.

Jennifer Urosevic [25:08]

I agree. And one of the things that's part of some of those prevention campaign pieces as well is how you take care of your overall eye health. If you could share

one message with Canadians to change some of their behaviour around their eye health, what would it be?

Dr. Allison Scott [25:26]

There are a lot of things that we can do, but just managing your general overall health. Your eye has a lot of blood vessels in it, often linked to our cardiovascular health. So just maintaining an overall healthy lifestyle: exercising, getting outside. But when you go outside, put your sunglasses on, because we know UV light can be damaging. So wearing your sunglasses when you're outside, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, like a diet with brightly coloured vegetables, is actually really, really good for your eyes. Sometimes people seem surprised when I start talking about diet as an optometrist, but it has such an important part in prevention. When we think of things like macular degeneration, for example, our diet can be a big part of that, and our overall health can have a big influence. Similarly, when we talk about eye exams and our eye health, and finding things like diabetes and high blood pressure for the first time, it works the other way too. Managing those conditions can help improve your eye health too. So, sunglasses when you're outside, and an overall good, heart-healthy lifestyle. And if you're a smoker, it does have an impact on your eye health, so quit smoking if you are a smoker, and don't start smoking if you aren't. I think those are some of the big ones.

Jennifer Urosevic [26:49]

Yeah, I think that's really important. I think of people in the workforce who are working behind computers and on their phones. You mentioned that, and that's where oftentimes people may feel like they're squinting or not seeing things as clearly. Any advice, and I'm speaking to myself here, on other things I should consider, as I'm behind a computer quite a bit on Zoom calls and things like that, to improve my eye health?

Dr. Allison Scott [27:18]

One of the biggest things we see with increased screen time is an increase in dry eye. When we stare at devices, we actually don't blink as much, and when we don't blink as much, our tears don't spread across our ocular surface. Blinking is a reflex, so it's really hard to remember to blink. So try to take regular breaks from your computer screen. Every 20 minutes, just look across the room, take a few blinks, and let your eyes relax and recover. And take longer breaks. Don't sit there for the full eight hours. Get up and move around. Hydrate. That's actually really important. Keeping yourself hydrated is really important. And if you're having those symptoms, if you're finding your eyes are burning, if they get red, if you find your vision is blurry at the end of the day, go see your optometrist. They

can have a detailed look to see specifically what other treatments might help you get through that workday.

Jennifer Urosevic [28:16]

I like that advice, and I think it helps with your overall health. When we focus on our eye health, but also our overall health, we're going to have some good health outcomes. All right. So CAO and Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada have developed a really strong partnership over the last number of years, and throughout a person's life, our work intersects. Tell us a little bit about what that means to the CAO.

Dr. Allison Scott [28:45]

I think it's a really important partnership. CAO is a community of optometrists, and we've spent a lot of time already today talking about prevention and early detection. But sometimes people are still going to have vision loss, and it's so important to still support those people who are living with vision loss. That's where Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada comes in. You have such a skill set for helping people navigate what their vision loss is, supporting them in whatever needs they have, finding the correct devices, the resource supports, and things like that. So I think it's such an important partnership, because our work collaborates really well together. It gives us a space to refer patients who need those services, and to make sure they have that support as well, versus just trying to figure it out on their own.

Jennifer Urosevic [29:44]

I love that. You bring me back to early in my career, when I was working frontline in an orientation and mobility role. I remember joining one of my clients at one of their optometry visits, because there were things we were noticing around depth perception, and I wasn't sure if more field loss had occurred. I could speak to what I was seeing functionally out in the community, and the optometrist was looking at how the eye was in the field of vision. Sorry, I'm not saying that right, but the field of vision was really being impacted. Together we could come up with a plan. There was a change in their eyeglasses, and there were strategies the optometrist shared with me about reducing glare that could help the work I was doing in some of those areas. As you were talking, it just brought me back to that moment. I think it is so important that we understand each other's roles and how we can collaborate on an outcome for one of our mutual clients.

Dr. Allison Scott [30:55]

And pardon the pun, but we each have a different lens that we use to look at a patient, right? So to be able to collaborate and work together to come up with

those different solutions, because we tend to look at it differently, from our different training, our different perspectives and our different lived experiences. And I think it's still important. Sometimes people in our vision loss community think, "Well, I don't need to go see them, because I know what my vision loss issue is." But there are still other things that can happen. Sometimes dry eye can be a factor, and we can still manage the comfort of someone's ocular surface. We can work with lenses and tints and other things to make a patient more comfortable with their vision and maximize how they see. But again, I think collaboration is the best way to care for those patients.

Jennifer Urosevic [31:52]

So a really important question, and I think it's always on the minds of all of us: if you ever get the opportunity to have 30 seconds with a health minister to talk about the national eye care strategy, what would you say?

Dr. Allison Scott [32:05]

I think there are two things I would focus on. One is that we need more public education. We know the role of routine care in the prevention of vision loss. Up to 75% of vision loss is preventable, but we need to educate Canadians on the importance of managing and taking care of their eyes and their eye health. The second is that we need more schools of optometry in Canada. Right now, about 50% of Canadian optometrists are actually trained in the United States. So having more opportunity for Canadians to train at home, closer to home, can help support Canadians, particularly in our rural and remote communities. Funding and supporting the infrastructure to develop more schools of optometry in Canada is really, really crucial and important. And if you do want to learn more about that, if you go to opto.ca/newschools, you can learn more about our initiatives there.

Jennifer Urosevic [33:02]

Wonderful. I'm going to check it out so I can stay up to date on the progress that you're making, and any way that we can help with your advocacy efforts, we're definitely interested.

Dr. Allison Scott [33:12]

Awesome. Thank you.

Jennifer Urosevic [33:14]

This series, as I said a little earlier, is being launched on World Sight Day. What does World Sight Day mean for the Canadian Association of Optometrists?

Dr. Allison Scott [33:23]

I think a lot of the things we've already touched on today are really what make World Sight Day so important. Advocating for the importance of our vision and our eye health is crucial. We know that as the rates of myopia increase, we may see more vision loss going forward. Making sure that people have access to care and access to the devices they need is so important. Prevention, and routine care, so you can have the treatments you need before it impacts your day-to-day life, because our vision is an important sense to us, right? And it's all along the spectrum. We talk a lot about prevention and early intervention, but also the support for people who are living with vision loss. I think it's also really crucial on World Sight Day to share the supports, the things that are accessible for people living with vision loss, and to help people anywhere on the visual spectrum and on their visual journey have the supports they need.

Jennifer Urosevic [34:28]

Yeah, I like that. One of the reasons why this work is so important to me goes back to the early days of my career. I remember a moment that changed my direction, making sure I always wanted to stay in a role that could continue to advance this, and how important supporting people is. You've talked about that: making sure people have the right service they need, at the right time, by the right person. And this integrated future model of making sure that we take eye care seriously is so important. I'll share a little story, and I'll ask you the same question, so you can start thinking about it: a moment that reminds you of why this work matters, even on hard days. Early on in my career, as I said earlier, I worked as an orientation and mobility specialist, and I was working with a child who was two. She was a twin, and her brother, I think he was two minutes older than her, so she always used to say, "He's my older brother," was running around her. The mom really wanted to help in this area. She was receiving a lot of services, and she had all of the functional ability to walk, but wouldn't take that first step. Back in those days, it wasn't common for us to introduce canes really early. But this mom and this child just seemed really motivated, and I put a little tiny white cane in this little girl's hand. She was still sitting down, and she was reaching for her toys, and she was finding that toy. And when she stood up, she used that cane to tell her what was in front of her. I still get goosebumps as I think about that moment. She took her very first steps. They were steps towards independence, and steps towards a future where she would be taking new types of steps in her world. I was so inspired by that, and I often think about that, especially on hard days. As we talked and built what we wanted to see in a national eye care strategy, and as I think about implementation, that story resonates: giving people the tools they need to live the life that they want. That

was so critical for me. Do you have a story or a moment that keeps you really motivated and keeps this work at the forefront?

Dr. Allison Scott [37:05]

I mean, that is a beautiful story. We talked about how resilient kids are, and I think that is definitely a good story to represent that. I can't think of just one story, but I think of those kids you give their first pair of glasses to, and you can just see that they're seeing the world in a different way. I do spend some time doing specialty contact lenses, and I think of fitting a patient who has vision loss related to corneal disease, and putting them in a contact lens that gets them back to seeing 20/20 for the first time in a long time. For some of those patients, it's the difference between being able to drive or not drive. I even think of a story where it was just, "Well, I just want to go with my friends and be able to read the menu that's on the wall." Just being able to give those simple things in life to someone, getting someone to that driving standard with a visual aid that maybe hadn't been presented before, can be life-changing. So it's those stories. And there are others too, where the diabetes had been undetected, and other things that were life-changing, even life-saving. That certainly helps get through the hard days. I really do love what I do, because I love being able to help people see better and navigate the world better. And so I'm happy to say there aren't a lot of those hard days, which is great.

Jennifer Urosevic [38:46]

Yeah, I love that. As you were talking, our patients and our clients give us that motivation to keep doing this important work, and making sure that Canadians have access to what they need when they need it. All right. So as we wrap up this episode, I just want to take a moment to thank you, Dr. Allison Scott from the Canadian Association of Optometrists, for your time, your passion and your dedication, not only to our work on the National Eye Care Strategy, but to your work every single day. Optometrists make a difference in the lives of many Canadians, in preventing blindness but also detecting some of those early eye conditions, and, like I learned tonight, a lot of other health areas as well. So thank you for your time this afternoon, and I look forward to seeing you again at some of our upcoming events.

Dr. Allison Scott [39:41]

Thank you so much, and thank you for having us and being able to present and speak with you today. I think this is so important. Any time we have a chance to talk about the importance of our eye health, I think it's good to take that, especially on World Sight Day, which is such an important day in eye care. And thank you for all the work that you do in the vision loss and rehabilitation

community. It's really important work that I think a lot of people maybe don't fully know about. So thank you for doing what you do, and for helping educate people on how to access those services when they need them.

[Theme music begins and plays to the end] [40:14]

Jennifer Urosevic [40:15]

All right, that's a wrap.

Jennifer Urosevic [40:18]

You can learn more about the Canadian Association of Optometrists at opto.ca, and about Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada's work at visionlossrehab.ca. If you're enjoying the series, follow wherever you're listening. It helps us find more people in these conversations.