

President's Insights May 2022

We practically have a petting zoo in our 1200 sq foot condo in Chicago. An aging cat (Bunny), two rescue dogs (Porsche and Missy), a fish (Maury) and two as yet unnamed snails. After providing nutrition to the zoo, I take Porsche and Missy for their morning walk. I purposely (to the dismay of my husband), leave my iPhone, apple watch and all other electronics at home. I want to focus on them, my surroundings and let my brain wander, usually thinking about the office or VOSH. One morning this week, I found myself musing on data collection; an important if not exciting topic.

Our success in getting chapters to report their data has been hit or miss at the best. As we begin our return to our humanitarian clinics and have to incorporate new procedures and routines, I hope that the habit of collecting and reporting our very important clinic data will become the norm.

I am certain that at a minimum, all chapters are keeping track of how many patients they are caring for at every clinic. Reporting the numbers gives all of the volunteers a sense of accomplishment, helps get them excited about returning for the next day of hard, rewarding work, and about signing up for their next trip. The leaders of each clinic should be excited to report this major accomplishment to VOSH/International so that they can be acknowledged for their dedication to caring for those who do not have access to quality eye and vision care.

Randall and I attended a very enjoyable joint VOSH CA and VOSH IL trip to Todos Santos and La Purisima, Mexico, in 2017. We used a very simple, one page exam form and were able to care for about 650 patients in four days. I brought the exam forms back home to Chicago with me and in one work day, in between seeing patients (I have great ICO externs), I was able to classify the data by age groups, gender, whether we provided single vision, bifocal glasses or readers, the most common medical conditions reported, most common refractive errors, and the most common ophthalmic conditions diagnosed. I also divided the glasses prescriptions based on the amount of astigmatism as we were investigating the use of the Ready2Clip glasses system. Later, I actually had fun detailing the data in two posters that were at the VOSH/International 2018 Meeting.

How many times have you been preparing for a clinic trip and wondered, Should I take more low cyl or high cyl glasses? More against the rule or with the rule? Should we pack more minus or more plus? Would it be better for me to request more glaucoma medications or should I prioritize anti-allergy and dry eye syndrome medication? If every chapter were to report the data from every clinic, we would have a gold mine of useful information that could be used to decide these questions.

Then imagine the positive contribution we could make by sharing this information with local, national and federal health and government agencies, NGOs and our own international chapters as they make decisions about health care goals. This data would be invaluable to those countries wishing to recognize optometry as the key primary eye care profession for the first time or to advocate for elevating the level of optometric education. Imagine the increased impact we could

have when working with the WHO and WCO if we were armed with this data. Our efforts would be much more effective if we could cite the number of patients we helped, the eye conditions we identified, and the value of those volunteered services and donated products. Some of our international chapters are starting to use our [universal data collection form](#) and many others are using their own forms because they know that evidence is key to advance the access to eye health care in their countries. When we visit their countries, we could contribute to that effort.

Instead of viewing it as a chore, I encourage all future clinic leaders to look at data collection and reporting as a rewarding way to acknowledge and document their hard work, to assist future clinic planners, and to expand the impact of your clinic beyond the amazing care given to patients by providing your information to help shape eye and vision care in the decades to come.

Michael Ciszek, OD, FVI, diplomate ABO
President
VOSH/International
ciszek@vosh.org

You can check Dr Ciszek's posters here:

[2018-Poster-La Purisima-Mexico](#)

[2018-Poster-Todos Santos-Mexico](#)