

Book Review

# New book tackles medico-legal issues in eye care

Dr. Yip Chee Chew

The implementation of the Optometrists and Opticians Act in 2007 marks a new era of eye care in Singapore. The passing of this landmark legislation reflects the growing public expectation and demand for a high standard of eye care delivered by qualified and well-trained professionals. Licensure of opticians and optometrists implies responsibility in one's practice, liability, mandatory continuing education and ethical conduct.

Against this backdrop, legal expert Associate Professor Catherine Tay and prominent ophthalmologist Dr. Kah Guan Au Eong have come together to draft *Medico-Legal and Ethical Issues in Eye Care*, a timely compendium designed to educate eye care professionals on the medico-legal and ethical issues in their practices.

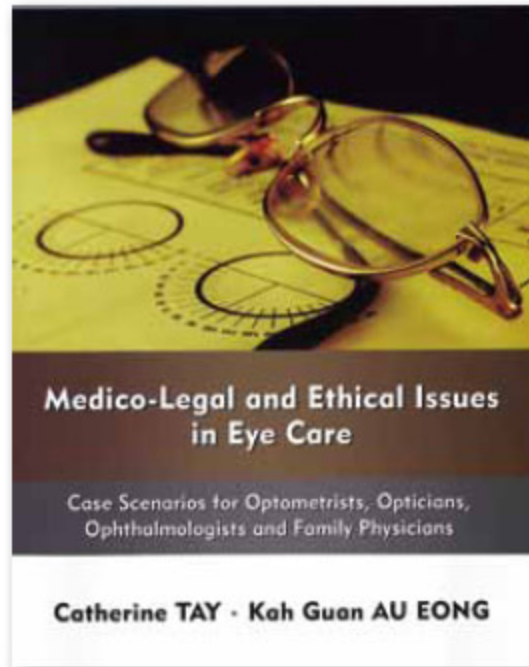
These issues, especially the legal perspectives, are sometimes inadequately emphasized in the basic training curriculum. Being renowned experts in their respective fields, they are well-positioned to contribute this essential and comprehensive book to bridge the knowledge gaps in these topics. The clever marrying of law and medicine in this book enables a balanced and holistic approach to manage these often complex issues.

The first section of the book gives a concise account of important legal definitions and principles. The technical jargon and legal concepts in the book may seem difficult to grasp to the uninformed layman. Nonetheless, the authors' clear and concise writing and skillful presentation of legal cases facilitate the learning process. The

possibilities for errant eye care practitioners to be sued not only under their respective professional legislations but also under civil law are reinforced. The reader's mind will be opened to a new horizon of potential medico-legal and ethical problems that may arise in practice. Conceivably, a better appreciation of these problems after reading the book may inspire practice modification to improve patient care.

The second section of the book consolidates the understanding of the first section with 42 clinical case scenarios, either in the form of real life situations or hypothetical examples, to illustrate how things can go astray. The "take-home message" at the end of each scenario crystalizes the pertinent learning points that one should put into practice to avert undesirable legal action. The scenarios are carefully selected to encompass a broad spectrum of practice situations.

The sensitivity and controversy of medical ethics have been handled tactfully and respectfully by the authors. In addition to highlighting the need for ethical conduct in patient management, the book also stresses the importance of collegiality and ethical behavior in interactions amongst eye care professionals. It is heartening to note that Khoo Teck Puat Hospital will be organizing



a medico-legal symposium this year during the 9th National Congress of Optometry and Opticianry to provide an open platform for discussion and clarification of these sensitive issues.

This excellent book provides an in depth and systematic coverage of the medico-legal and ethical issues in eye care. It is wisely crafted, with the aim of educating the reader to not only be cognizant of these issues, but to also uphold one's professional reputation and to avoid being the subject of a lawsuit. I highly recommend this practical and informative compendium to the practicing optician, optometrist and ophthalmologist. **MI**

For more on recent developments in primary eye care in Singapore visit the:

**9th National Congress of Optometry and Opticianry**

Date: 28-29 October 2010  
Location: Auditorium, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital  
Tel.: 6602 3283  
Website: [www.ktph.com.sg/index.php/main/event\\_details/26](http://www.ktph.com.sg/index.php/main/event_details/26)

## Industry UPDATE

*Industry Update brings you updates on disease management and advances in pharmacotherapy based on reports from symposia, conferences and interviews as well as the latest clinical data. This month's Industry Update was made possible through unrestricted educational grants from Servier & Abbott Nutrition.*

Comprehensive risk management in hypertension

..... Pg XI

Oral supplements key to good nutrition for the elderly

..... Pg XII

### About the reviewer

Dr. Yip Chee Chew is head and senior consultant at the Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences Department, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, Singapore. He is also the head and senior consultant in oculoplastics at the NHG Eye Institute, National Healthcare Group, and a senior consultant in the Department of Ophthalmology, Tan Tock Seng Hospital. He is currently serving as vice president of the Asia-Pacific Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

# New childhood pneumococcal vaccine launched

Greg Town

A new generation, 10-valent childhood pneumococcal vaccine has been launched in Singapore.

The vaccine (Synflorix™, GlaxoSmith-Kline) has been approved in many countries around the world for active immunization against invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD) and middle ear infections (acute otitis media; AOM) caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* in infants and young children.

According to the World Health Organization, pneumococcal diseases are probably the leading cause of vaccine-preventable deaths in the world.

"Pneumococcal disease is a significant cause of morbidity and mortality around the world, [including in] Singapore," said Associate Professor Daniel Goh, head of paediatrics at the University Children's Medical Institute, National University Hospital, Singapore. Goh is also president of the Singapore Paediatric Society and vice-president of the College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Singapore.

Every year in Singapore about 70 children under 5 years of age are hospitalized for IPD, with seven dying from it between 2000 and 2009.

"In Singapore, where we are so developed and the healthcare system is so good, every death is one too many," said Goh.

At highest risk of poor outcomes from pneumococcal diseases are the very young and the very old. While pneumococcal vaccines are only indicated in young children, studies suggest that the elderly population may also enjoy some protective benefit as a result of herd immunity.

Globally, there are more than 90 different strains (or serotypes) of *S. pneumoniae*, of which 10 to 15 are responsible for 80 to 90 percent of all IPDs in young children. The new vaccine has been designed to protect against 10 of the most common strains.

As well as protecting against IPD, it is also expected to be effective against AOM, the incidence of which peaks among children aged 6 to 18 months, and for which at least half of cases are caused by pneumococcal bacteria.



The new vaccine is expected to protect infants and young children against invasive pneumococcal disease and acute otitis media.

"Otitis media is a frequently occurring yet preventable childhood disease associated with a high degree of morbidity and impact on quality of life," said Associate Professor Henry Tan, head and senior consultant of otolaryngology, KK Women's and Children's Hospital, Singapore.

"It is a considerable economic burden on our health resources and [its] prevention is much more important than treatment." **MI**

## Singapore Events

**05/08/10**  
**GP-CME Care of Patients in Remission in Primary Care**  
Info: National Healthcare Group (NHG) Polyclinics  
Tel: +65 6355 3000  
Website: [www.netcare.com.sg/nhg/nhgeventsforhos/calendarofevents.asp?eventgroup=4&](http://www.netcare.com.sg/nhg/nhgeventsforhos/calendarofevents.asp?eventgroup=4&)

**07/08/10**  
**GP-CME Surgery for Pectus Excavatum**  
Info: National University Hospital  
Tel: +65 6772 2535  
Website: [www.netcare.com.sg/nhg/nhgeventsforhos/calendarofevents.asp?eventgroup=4&](http://www.netcare.com.sg/nhg/nhgeventsforhos/calendarofevents.asp?eventgroup=4&)

**10/08/10**  
**GP-CME Corneal Transplants**  
Info: National Healthcare Group (NHG) Polyclinics  
Tel: +65 6355 3000  
Website: [www.netcare.com.sg/nhg/nhgeventsforhos/calendarofevents.asp?eventgroup=4&](http://www.netcare.com.sg/nhg/nhgeventsforhos/calendarofevents.asp?eventgroup=4&)