

# OPTOMETRIST CURBS

## DIZZINESS WITH PRISM LENSES

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**BIRMINGHAM** — Imagine walking through life wearing fun-house goggles that project images through a prism, everything just out of kilter.

That's how some people see everything. And for them, prism lenses will correct the problem.

Optometrists at Vision Specialists of Birmingham say they can fix the dizzying effect of having one eye higher than the other, a condition called vertical heterophoria.

Many people don't even know they have it.

The problem causes headaches, neck cramps and, in extreme cases, an aversion to going out of the home, said Dr. Debby Feinberg, who is at the forefront of the practice of neurovisual optometry, which includes the treatment of vertical heterophoria.

Vertical heterophoria is often

not detected during a standard optometric eye examination.

Both eyes focus, but do not line up, Feinberg explained. In order to see properly, the body compensates to overcome the imbalance. That results in muscle strain around the eyes and neck, dizziness and severe headaches.

Feinberg said her patients are "the silent dizzy sufferers." They go from doctor to doctor seeking relief, but medication and therapy don't help. Often they have suffered on the average of eight to 12 years before they come to see her.

She fits patients with a special set of glasses that counter the effect with prism lenses, bringing the eyes into balance and helping them work together.

Before, she said patients would skip lines while reading. With the new glasses, "they all of a sudden can read for enjoyment for the first time," Feinberg said.

**See LENSES on page 26A**

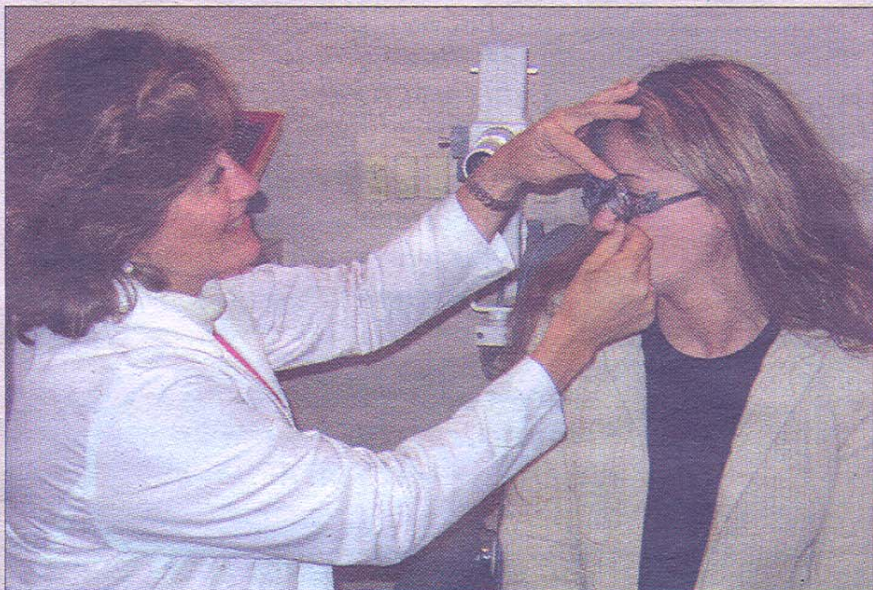


Photo by Rebecca Jones

**Optometrist Debby Feinberg adjusts a pair of prism glasses on receptionist and optician Jennifer Parsons at Vision Specialists of Birmingham. Feinberg demonstrates how she would adjust the glasses to help a patient suffering from vertical heterophoria, a condition where one eye is higher than the other.**



# Lenses

from page 3A

"I treated a woman who suffered with migraine headaches for nine years, had been to a dozen specialists, whose symptoms disappeared when she was fitted with the proper lenses," Feinberg said.

Birmingham patient Sylvia Jaeger used to think she had a panic disorder when she became ill from the condition. She'd avoid grocery shopping and driving. The dizziness got so bad she was afraid to take a shower for fear of falling.

After being fitted with the prism lenses, Jaeger said, "it is a miracle."

Other consequences of vertical heterophoria are lightheadedness, poor depth perception, unsteadiness while walking, motion sickness, light sensitivity, neck and shoulder discomfort and a feeling of being overwhelmed in large stores or malls, Feinberg said.

Feinberg collaborated with her brother-in-law, Dr. Arthur Rosner, an ear, nose and throat specialist in Sterling Heights, to develop a 29-question survey to help diagnose the problem.

An ideal collaborator, for a long time Rosner didn't realize he had the condition himself.

While Feinberg was studying at the Illinois College of Optometry, she treated a patient with the vertical heterophoria. Then Rosner was found to have condition, and Feinberg was able to help him.

After that, Rosner began to notice similar symptoms among some of his patients. Dr. Mark Rosner, Feinberg's husband, an emergency room physician, began recognizing that he too had patients who were baffling doctors with chronic headaches and dizziness. None of them were responding to conventional therapies or treatments. They both sent these patients to Feinberg, and most of them experienced marked improvement.

"It was a case of different branches of medicine not exchanging information," said Mark Rosner.

Now Feinberg is working to make other health care professionals aware of the diagnosis and treatment of vertical heterophoria, and taking referrals.

To learn more, call Vision Specialists of Birmingham at (248) 258-9000.