



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **optomap® retinal scan with local optometrist leads to early diagnosis of patient's carotid arterial blockage.**

**Symptoms of doctor's own retinal problem were first seen in an optomap, emphasizing the critical importance of its ultra-widefield imaging.**

**Summary:** Sheila Gibb was visiting a neighbor on Victoria Day when she noticed the trees and sky had the appearance of a 'pink lace' overlay. Gibb immediately went to see her optometrist, Dr. Dana Blakolmer. Through the use of an Optos **optomap**, Dr. Blakolmer discovered several retinal hemorrhages in the affected left eye. Suspecting carotid occlusive disease, she immediately referred Gibb to her primary care physician. The fast-moving disease took a toll on Gibb's eyesight in one eye, but receiving treatment for a 70% carotid blockage saved her life, and laser surgery saved her eye. The **optomap** technology allows eye care providers to identify markers for systemic (or non-eye) diseases such as hypertension, anemias, diabetes, bowel issues and certain cancers, as well as diagnose a number of eye disorders.

**TORONTO, CANADA — (November 29, 2011)** When Sheila Gibb was visiting a neighbor on Victoria Day she noticed what she described as "lace curtain" visual phenomena — the trees and sky had the appearance of a "pink lace" overlay. Her vision returned to normal the next day but the 72-year-old former nurse dutifully called the office of her eye care provider, Dr. Dana Blakolmer, of Dr Dana Blakolmer and Associates. Dr. Blakolmer's staff urged Gibb to see the doctor.

Dr. Blakolmer examined Gibb the day after her vision disturbances. "Sheila was in a hurry, so I did an **optomap** as a time saver," explained Dr. Blakolmer. The doctor discovered several retinal hemorrhages in the affected left eye. Suspecting carotid occlusive disease, she immediately referred Gibb to her primary care physician and a retinal specialist.

Gibb was in a race against time. It took several days for her to get into her primary care physician. It took an additional two weeks for her to get into a retinal specialist. "My family doctor did a carotid Doppler test that showed I had a 70% blockage of my carotid artery on the left side and in July I underwent surgery to open that artery." Meanwhile, while waiting for her retinal specialist appointment, her vision problems reoccurred — and areas of her eyesight began to disappear. "The Ophthalmologist diagnosed a retinal vein occlusion" [essentially a blockage of the circulation that drains the retina of blood.] Gibb had Avastin injected into her eye and two retinal laser surgeries. "They were unable to save my eyesight," she said, "but they did save my eye. If new blood vessels had continued to grow, there was a good chance that I would have lost my eye."

Gibb, who comes from a medical family, understands the complexities of medical care. She was trained as a nurse, her father was a doctor, and her son and husband are both doctors. Nonetheless, she was disappointed at the outcome of her medical problems. "While I am very grateful to Dr. Blakolmer and the **optomap** for helping alert me to this problem and ultimately allowing me to prevent a stroke or heart attack," Gibb commented, "I can't help but be disappointed that I lost the vision in my eye. At first I thought it might have been avoided if I had gone to the emergency room, but I was told that even with a 70%

blockage, they still would have just sent me home. So unless I had been seen, diagnosed and operated on, all within 6 hours of seeing the first 'curtain' it was inevitable that I would have vision loss."

Dr. Dana Blakolmer has been offering **optomaps** to her patients for over five years. Dr. Blakolmer said, "Providing an **optomap** to my patients is very important to me. In certain instances, like in Sheila's image, the **optomap** can allow us to see changes inside the eye that are caused by serious or life-threatening conditions – like her carotid occlusive disease – long before other symptoms appear. Because of their location, the hemorrhages would have been missed by other types of eye exams." Because these markers are often first detected inside the eye, an **optomap** as part of a complete eye exam can be key to helping the patient receive an early diagnosis. "I may not tell my patients that the **optomap** has saved a patient's life," Dr. Blakolmer said, "but I am very passionate about it and that comes across as I counsel patients about the importance of the **optomap**. I would not want to practice eye care without my **optomap** machine!"

Dr. Blakolmer's own genetic retinal disorder, FEVR, was diagnosed through an **optomap** in 2009, making a believer out of the 41-year-old doctor as to the benefits of a yearly **optomap**. "Retinal hemorrhages are an unusual finding for someone as young and healthy as myself. Luckily I have a very mild case of FEVR," she stated, "but the first indication that I had a problem was seen in an **optomap** image showing peripheral hemorrhages in a sectoral [pie-shaped] fashion in one eye and a couple small dot hemes in temporal [outside] periphery in the other eye." This was the first time that the eye care provider realized that she had the indicators for this problem in her own eye. "I was scared and surprised. How could I, an optometrist, who is

supposed to know everything about the eye, not know that I had a problem? It made me believe in the Optos **optomap** even more. **Optomap** is changing the way we practice eye care and is reinforcing the importance of yearly eye exams.”

### **About Dr. Dana Blakolmer, O.D.**

Dr. Blakolmer graduated with honours from the University of Waterloo Doctor of Optometry program. During her studies she completed an external rotation at Kaiser Permanente in Washington DC and Falls Church, Virginia.

Upon graduation, Dr. Blakolmer was a clinical supervisor at the School of Optometry at the University of Waterloo and at Huron Regional Center in Barrie. Dr. Blakolmer started her own private practice at Dr Dana Blakolmer and Associates in 2002, after seven years as an associate of the Oshawa Clinic. Her office is next to her father’s optical store, The Optical Boutique. She has one full-time associate, Dr. Salima Parpia, and one part-time associate, Dr. Lisa Chow (covering Dr. Parpia’s practice while she is on maternity leave). They aim to provide superior ocular health care using state-of-the-art technology. For more information, please visit <http://www.oshawaoptometry.com/>

### **About optomap**

Optos introduced the **optomap** technology in the late 1990’s, allowing eye care providers to help identify a growing list of conditions as part of a routine eye exam, often leading to early diagnosis and treatment. In addition to traditional eye conditions such as glaucoma, retinal detachment or hemorrhage, and diabetic retinopathy, the **optomap** is able to identify changes inside the eye that help diagnose some bowel and blood cancers, incipient strokes, tumors pressing on the optical

nerve and more. Early research suggests that in the future, the **optomap** might become a valuable tool in the detection and monitoring of Alzheimer's disease.

The **optomap** is a retinal scanner that generates an ultra-widefield image. Through its patented Virtual Point™ technology, it puts the scan point within the eye, allowing a simultaneous view of 200 degrees (82%) of the retina. This is a much wider image than is obtainable with traditional retinal viewing methods, such as a fundus camera or an ophthalmoscope. Through the use of two different laser wavelengths, the **optomap** is able to see inside the retinal wall itself (the retinal substructures) to identify changes or problems in blood vessels. The technology allows a photo to be taken of the retinal area, which serves to educate the patient and to document the evaluation. In addition, patients often prefer **optomaps** due to the greater comfort and decreased imaging time compared to other retinal scans. For more information about **optomap** visit [www.optomapexam.com](http://www.optomapexam.com)

### **About Optos plc**

Optos plc is building *The* retina company. Our vision is to be recognized as a leading provider of devices and solutions to ophthalmic professionals for improved patient care. Optos has a range of medical devices that support different customer segments and patient levels. For more information, please visit the website – [www.optos.com](http://www.optos.com)

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