Laser pointers are commonly used in academic centers for lectures, and until recently they have been considered relatively safe. However, there has been an increasing concern that laser pointers for recreational use can result in a laser burn if pointed toward an individual’s eye. If the individual is unfortunately looking directly in the line of the laser, it can cause a maculopathy that may be permanent. Some of the laser pointers that can be obtained online may be non-compliant with the Code of Federal Regulations. These lasers are much more powerful, with their laser energy possibly inflicting retinal damage, especially in the pediatric age group where lack of knowledge of the possible risks of recreational use exist in both children and parents.

In this issue, Mtanes et al. highlight seven young patients (8 eyes) who were subjected to ocular laser exposure with resultant injury. Although most of the patients’ retinal injuries improved, that has not always been the experience of other pediatric ophthalmologists. I recently examined a patient who failed a vision seeing examination with less than normal vision in one eye. Unfortunately, he had a large macular scar from a laser burn and his visual acuity in that eye never improved to better than 20/200. Because his recent vision loss was in one eye, the child was not aware that the injury had occurred.

According to Mtanes et al., the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Laser Institution of America released a safety notification to the public regarding possible eye injuries from high-powered, commonly available hand-held laser pointers. From my experience in examining these ocular injuries, it appears that notification has not received enough attention in the public arena.