

Subject: therapeutic registration for optometrists
Date: Sunday, 30 January 2011 6:18:19 PM
Importance: High

To whom it may concern,

Please find below my submission to the board in regards to the proposal for therapeutic qualification to be included as a requirement for general Optometric registration. I **strongly oppose** the proposal.

I am an Optometrist who graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Optometry Degree in 2001. I have been working as an Optometrist for 10 years, 8 of those years running my own practice. I live in a large NSW regional town and see a few thousand patients every year. I see no logical reason why Optometrists should be forced to obtain Therapeutic Qualification in order to practice as an Optometrist in Australia.

I certainly have an intention to complete the Therapeutic registration at some stage in the future. Infact, I have enrolled in the UNSW course, however have deffered the study a number of times. The issues that make the course difficult for me to complete are threefold:

- I am located 600 kilometers from Sydney (obvious time and financial constraints).
- I have two children under three years old and may choose to have more.
- I currently run two very busy Optometric practices.

I view the therapuetic qualification as something that would be good to have, but not important or essential in my everyday practice of Optometry. I have discussed this with many colleagues who do have the endorsement, and they frequently comment that they hardly ever use it. I have a close working relationship with the local Ophthalmologists and General Practitioners and often refer patients for Ophthalmic drugs when necessary. This balance works well.

In relation to the questions asked:

1. No, they are able to access ophthalmic drugs from a range of other health professionals.
2. Not at this stage in Australia. Most patients with a 'red eye' will still most likely present to a General Practitioner.
3. No, as discussed above. Forcing this requirement will render Optometrists unable or unwilling to obtain the qualification quickly essentially unemployable, and take away their livelihood.
4. Currently registered Optometrists should retain their registration for their practicing lifetime. Obviously new graduates will be therapeutically endorsed.
5. ?? Unsure on this. I can see an argument for both options given new graduates will have the qualification.
6. No, it is unnessecary. They should be able to if they wish.
7. Only 800 of 4000 Optometrists in this country are currently endorsed. To force 80% of all current Optometrists to complete the therapuetic course before 2014 is ridiculous.

In summary, I am strongly opposed to requiring Optometrists to obtain a therapuetic qualification to practice Optometry. I have been in practice for 10 years, I enjoy my profession, I do a good job, and I dont believe my patients miss out on anything because I do not hold a therapuetic qualification.

Feel free to contact me to discuss further.

Kind regards,
Elke Hutchins
Optometrist - Albury, NSW