

Subject: Submission re: Optometrists / therapeutics
 Date: Thursday, 27 January 2011 7:07:42 PM

The following are answers to the 7 questions in the "Request for Comments" letter sent to me recently - it was undated and unsigned.

1. I do believe the public would benefit if all optometrists were therapeutically qualified -as would the Medicare system. It would save a lot of needless consultaions with Optom to GP to Optom etc..
2. I think the requirement is reasonable, but only if the process of gaining the qualification is made simpler and more accessible. Remote learning needs to be permitted and the excess "waffle" taught in the Therapeutics course should be removed. It should be set by clinicians, not academics who wish to massage their egos -as was my perception after sitting the exams in 2008.
3. No. Optometrists trained overseas are a valuable resource -especially to us in country areas. The process for these optoms to sit exams is already complicated, expensive and INFREQUENT - leading to frustration and confusion. OS trained optoms should have a period of grace -say 5yrs after beginning work here in Australia before being forced to sit Therapeutics exams.
4. I think a period of grace of 10years is reasonable. This allows optoms with life situations that don't allow for time to do it (eg: young kids etc..) to be able to plan for the time that is right for the course.
5. Asking OS trained optoms to sit for Therapeutics in 2014 is unrealistic - this should only be required when ALL optoms in Aust/NZ have this qualification.
6. YES. If they want all the practising optoms to do it, then they should too! You can't make a decision "fro all" and then provide exclusion clauses! This is why, for optoms already qualified, a period of grace needs to be in place.
7. Impediments are:
 - a) How to educate 3200 plus optoms in therapeutics by 2014 -this will put an unbearable strain on the University system -and you cannot now lower the standards for obtaining therapeutics= this would be both inequitable and devisive
 - b) personal circumstances of some optoms will not allow them to do the course with such limited notice
 - c) has anyone put their hand up and said "We can provide the course?"

These can be overcome by :

- a) careful and considered consultation with optometry association and not rushing the process.
- b) involving a variety of practitioners to have input before a decision is made
- c) realising that optoms not therapeutically qualified have admirably served the community for over 50yrs and will continue to do so if allowed!

Yours sincerely Ian Clemens BSc.(Optom) PGCOT