

Subject: Therapeutic qualifications
Date: Friday, 25 February 2011 3:53:29 PM

Response to 'request for comments' on therapeutic qualifications, AHPRA letter dated 20 January 2011.

1. I do not believe that there will be any real public benefit in requiring optometrists to hold therapeutic qualifications. Any public benefit would be offset by the extra responsibility and time spent by optometrists for no extra remuneration.
2. It is not reasonable to expect all optometrists to hold therapeutic qualifications. We have done well as a profession working with GPs and Ophthalmologists. I see no need to change this, especially since there is time and money to be spent doing so at no extra financial benefit.
3. No, therapeutic qualifications should not be a requirement to practice optometry in Australia.
4. If any requirement is introduced for therapeutic qualifications, then a grandfather clause should be provided to allow optometrists currently practicing to continue without therapeutic qualifications. This would give a gradual transition to full therapeutic qualifications as older optometrists retire and new graduates take their place.
5. An overseas trained optometrist, who is already practicing, should also not be required to hold therapeutic qualifications.
6. Optometrists in non-clinical roles should not be required to hold therapeutic qualifications.
7. As less than a quarter of optometrists hold therapeutic qualifications, the majority of optometrists do not see this as a part of our job. To spend the time and money to be certified and not be paid any extra for consultations not viable for our businesses. Optometrists who are certified should be paid more for the extra care and responsibility put on them.

I have good working relationship with the Ophthalmologists and GPs that I work with. As long as optometrists diagnose correctly and refer appropriately, there is no need for them to actually manage the treatment. Therefore I see no need for therapeutic qualifications to be made mandatory.

Kind regards,

Rita Thurston Optometrist