

Subject: submission of comments re: therapeutics + registration
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Comments from Optometrist

Hi, I'm Geoff Grounds, employee optometrist.
 Graduated 1999 QUT.

Not yet therapeutically qualified, likely to do the course at my leisure in the next few years, mostly so that I don't become a "second class optometrist", in the eye of a future employer.
 I currently work in a capital city, within slingshot of numerous ophthalmologists, and thus see no great benefit to becoming Therapeutic.... apart from the above "second class" reasoning, as access to timely medicines and diagnoses is quick and easy for me and my customers.

In answer to the specific questions, this is what I think:

1. Is there any public benefit in requiring all optometrists to be eligible for therapeutic endorsement?

No. For example, not all optometrists are in clinical practice. Thus there would be no public benefit from their upgraded skill set. Is there public benefit from encouraging MORE optometrists to be therapeutic? Yes. But not ALL.

This encouragement already exists – e.g. competition with graduates for a job; or, competition with other practitioners in your town; or, being one of few health care providers in a regional location.

2. Is such a requirement a reasonable expectation of optometrists?

The individual optometrist is in the best position to determine whether their clients will be best served by this upgraded skill set. The regional optometrist would be mad not to have it, the capital city optometrist might see little advantage to his/her current co-management and referral arrangements.

3. Should therapeutic qualifications be a requirement for practice as an optometrist in Australia?

No. In time it will become increasingly common, via normal demographic shift.

4. If so, should there be a period of grace to allow all registered optometrists to gain the necessary qualifications and how long should the period be?

If the board were to go ahead with this, this is a practical discussion to be had with the providers of the qualification, as they would be obliged to train those. I imagine it might reasonably take 10 years to get all optoms "done".

5. To be consistent with Australian graduates, should overseas-trained optometrists applying for general registration in Australia for the first time be required to complete appropriate competency assessments for therapeutic practice from 2014?

I reckon that if most optometrists aren't Therapeutic, then it would be unfair to demand Therapeutic to be held by imported optoms. If in a few years 50% are Therapeutic, it might then be seen as fair to demand it.

BTW, IMHO, 50% therapeutically qualified in a few years would be a logistical nightmare, bordering on impossibility.

6. Should optometrists holding general registration practising in non-clinical roles, such as

management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, be required to hold therapeutic qualifications?

No. It serves no purpose whatsoever. A two tier system will work fine for many years to come, and then demography will solve the perceived problem for you/us.

7. Are there impediments to the proposal that need to be considered and if so, can these be overcome?

- A top down approach will engender anger within the profession. It is a great burden for many who won't be advantaged by Therapeutics, only disadvantaged by cost/time/business/family issues.
- There are already "natural" incentives to obtain the qualification, without the need for threats of de-registration.
- A "natural" demographic shift will soon enough take care of the current imbalance.
- Institutions offering the course would need to be consulted, prior to deciding on time frames

Cheers,

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