



THEMATIC REPORT

Proposed College of Opticians of Ontario
Standard of Practice—Optician-Performed Refraction

August, 2007

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Outline of Feedback Procedure

Packages were mailed to 2,500 COO members and stakeholders — June, 2007

Feedback forms on the proposed issue of Refraction due to the COO — August 17, 2007

Package Contents:

- Fact Sheet on Refraction Standard of Practice
- The Canadian Ophthalmological Society Vision Screening Guidelines
- The College of Opticians of Ontario's Draft Standard of Practice for Refraction, Stakeholder Consultation, 2007
- A Request for Comments
- Feedback Form

General Feedback on Refraction

- Twenty-five responses were submitted.
- Of the twenty-five submissions, four were opposed to optician-performed refraction; nineteen were in agreement with optician-performed refraction; and two did not express an opinion either because they did not feel well enough versed in the topic, or because they are requesting that more information first be provided.

	Total	Percentage
Total Packages Sent	2,500	
Total Packages Received	25	1.0
➤ Positive Feedback	19	0.8
➤ Negative Feedback	4	0.2
➤ No opinion/need more clarification	2	0.08

General Perceptions of Optician-Performed Refraction

- **Training**
 - Provided that the optician has received the appropriate training, then she/he should be permitted to perform refractions.

- **Competition and choice**
 - Allowing opticians to refract will provide customers with a greater opportunity for choice and will contribute to market competition.
 - The draft document does not allow for an expansion of public choice, as the required intensive involvement of an authorized prescriber precludes any autonomy on behalf of the optician and, in turn, does not allow for market competition.

- **Continuing education (CE) credits**
 - It may be difficult for an optician to earn eight credits based on refracting alone. Thus, CE credits in refraction might include anatomy, retinoscopy and diabetic screening.

- **Authorized prescribers**
 - What is the definition of an authorized prescriber? An optometrist, medical doctor, or ophthalmologist?
 - If a patient has already had a full ocular-visual assessment performed by a prescriber, it seems unlikely that that individual would then visit an optician for a refraction test (ie. full oculo visual assessments are valid for longer than 365 days, making any refractive test within this period redundant).
 - Requiring clearance from an authorized prescriber places too many restrictions on the optician.

- **Unauthorized practice**
 - Allowing opticians to refract may lead to the creation of establishments that employ and permit unqualified individuals to refract.

- **Public confusion**
 - There is already confusion on behalf of the public regarding the scope of practice of opticians, and permitting opticians to refract will only exacerbate such confusion.

General Recommendations Regarding Optician-Performed Refraction

➤ **Restrictions**

- Opticians should be permitted to perform refractions only on individuals between the ages of 18 and 60; and only on such individuals with an acuity of 20/30 (or whatever seems appropriate).

➤ **Standard of Practice**

- The proposed Standard of Practice for Optician-Performed Refractions should include the provision that refraction by opticians be performed only under the direct supervision of the prescribing doctor. While the DRAFT Standard of Practice does not prohibit an optician from performing refractions under supervision, it does not require it.

Clause 4(a) and 4(c) should be removed from the Standard of Practice, as they are inconsistent with HRRAC's advice to the Minister, which is that refraction be limited to "those circumstances where such refracting is undertaken in collaboration with an optometrist or a physician for the

Quotations from Feedback

“I agree with the proposal set forth; if the optician has the appropriate training and desire to perform refraction, they should be able to.”

“I do not think opticians are capable of doing any proper refraction....I do not think opticians can define [macular degeneration, cataracts and floaters] from this instrument....even with the refraction course training it is never sufficient.”

“Opticians can perform refracting without special authority from any other health care professional. Refracting is not a reserved activity and the 2006 HPRAC report to the Minister confirmed that fact. Opticians who dispense contact lenses perform refracting in the course of completing a contact lens fit. The restrictions in this draft document seem to impose unnecessary limitations on this practice.”

“To return to the Ministry of Health and Long-term Services with a Standard of Practice that does not move the refracting initiative forward can have the effect of undermining not only the professional goals of Ontario Opticians but also the forward momentum that has been generated by the work of Opticians in other provinces.”

“As far as Continuing Education, it could be hard to get eight credits purely based on Refracting.”

“In a real world this all sounds fine and dandy but what optometrist is going to delegate the refracting part of the ocular-visual assessment to an optician? If a patient has had a full ocular-visual assessment why would they be going to an optician for refraction? There are too many restrictions that would not only be confusing to the optician let alone the patient.”

“My biggest fear is that this will open the door to many more cut rate establishments who will not have qualified people doing the job correctly.”

“Will this best serve the elderly who at times have other health issues that are diagnosed by a thorough eye exam. Again, I reiterate, which serves the public best?”

“We could certainly follow the guidelines that the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia have adopted, performing sight testing between the ages of 19 and 65 without the involvement of a physician or optometrist.”