

# OPTOMETRISTS BOARD OF QUEENSLAND

## Newsletter

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### CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the Board's Newsletter for 2004. This will be a challenging year for the Board, working with Queensland Health and the Education Sector to implement the Ministerial approval for Optometrists to have access to use Therapeutic Drugs.

The Board and industry thank the outgoing Minister for her work and her approval for this advancement in Optometric practice in Queensland. The Board would also like to welcome the new Minister and look forward to a close working relationship.

The role of the Board has changed significantly with the introduction of the new act in 2002. The emphasis has shifted from regulation to education and competency of practice. With the imminent introduction of a Code of Practice and the requirement of the Board to ensure competency for renewal of registration, the Board will concentrate on standards to best protect the interests of the people of Queensland.

I would also like to issue a vote of thanks to the Board's previous Chairperson Mr Ian Kent on his outstanding service to the Board and the profession over many years. Likewise I welcome Ms Nancy Atkinson to the Board and hope she has a long and fruitful association with the Board. The Board has a broad spread of expertise and I would like to thank all Board members for their excellent contributions.

**Colin Waldron**  
Chairperson

### MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

The following persons are appointed to the Board for the current term until 27 September 2007:

- Mr CA Waldron (Chairperson)
- Dr K Schmid (Deputy Chairperson)
- Ms N Atkinson
- Professor L Carney
- Mr R Cooper
- Mr DJ Lowe (representative of the users of the services of optometrists)
- Ms S Manger (Solicitor)
- Ms S Scott (representative of the users of the services of optometrists, Board Treasurer)
- Ms A Webber

### INTRODUCTION OF THERAPEUTICS INTO QUEENSLAND

A Ministerial Advisory Committee on extension of practice for Optometrists has been meeting regularly since the Ministerial endorsement of the introduction of Therapeutics in late 2003.

This Committee has been developing pathways for the educational delivery of programs which will enable Optometrists to gain accreditation in this field.

Currently, it is anticipated that courses will be available through QUT in late 2004 and 2005. It is anticipated that similar Board approval processes to those used for Diagnostic Pharmaceutical Agents will be required.

Registrants will be updated through 2004 on any developments in this important area of Optometric Practice.

## **LASER SURGERY REFERRALS**

During 2003 the Board investigated, in conjunction with the Medical Board of Queensland issues related to patient referrals for Laser Sight Surgery. Below is the Board's policy position on this matter:

Under normal circumstances, a comprehensive consultation as covered by Medicare would provide sufficient information for a referral to an Ophthalmologist for laser surgery assessment.

There may be some circumstances when the referring Optometrist and the patient are located some distance from the Ophthalmologist, when the Ophthalmologist may ask the Optometrist to perform certain procedures before the Ophthalmologist sees the patient. In these cases the Optometrist should be paid by the Ophthalmologist on a "fee for service" basis, after the original referral is made.

If the Optometrist receives a fee for service performed before laser surgery the following should apply:

1. The Laser Surgery centre should request in writing that the Optometrist perform a "fee for service" work on their behalf.
2. This work is non-Medicare rebatable and must be paid for by the patient or Ophthalmologist.
3. These services should be for necessary procedures not normally repeated by the Ophthalmologist.

There should be no fee or recompense for the actual referral to the Ophthalmologist.

There is no problem with an Ophthalmologist referring a patient to an Optometrist for a pre-laser surgery examination paid by the Ophthalmologist, provided this occurs after the initial referral to the Ophthalmologist.

Any further treatment associated with laser surgery performed by the Optometrist should be paid by the Ophthalmologist on a "fee for service basis". The policy position of the Board is that the payment of a fee for referral of a patient for laser surgery is "unprofessional conduct".

## **RENEWAL OF GENERAL REGISTRATION (S.68)**

Registrants will be applying to renew their registration each year. Under the new legislation the Board has the power to introduce "recency of practice requirements" eg maintaining an adequate connection with the profession by undertaking continuing professional education or undertaking a minimum number of practice hours within a specific period of time.

However, until such time as the Board introduces "recency of practice requirements" the Board must renew the application for general registration.

*Registrants will be given adequate notification before "recency of practice requirements" are introduced. This is anticipated to be a joint introduction from the 13 Health Practitioner Boards.*

## **RESTORATION OF GENERAL REGISTRATION (S.76)**

*A person can only apply for restoration of general registration within 3 months from the expiry date.*

They are restored to the date the Board approves the restoration (there is no provision for backdating) therefore registrants will have a "gap" in their registration if they apply to be restored after their registration has expired. If a registrant fails to restore within the 3 month period they will then need to apply for General Registration and if they have antecedent qualifications then registration will not be automatic.

Please remember that applications for renewal of registration will be sent out at the end of April each year not December as was previously the case. Your renewal notice should be enclosed with this Newsletter.

Registrations cannot be backdated or reinstated so Optometrists must be aware that HIC has advised the Board that they will not pay out on claims for periods where Optometrists are not registered. A list of Optometrists who do not pay the required fee by 30 June 2004 will be provided to HIC.

## **DIAGNOSTIC PHARMACEUTICAL AGENTS (DPA)**

Recently the Board surveyed those Optometrists not listed as authorised for DPA. As a result of this process it has been determined by the Board that registrants should be able to dilate as a minimum standard of care of an Optometrist. The Board has adopted the policy that certification for DPA will be an ongoing requirement for registration from the end of 2005.

The Board will make available further information in 2004 as to how Optometrists without DPA can obtain accreditation.

## **CODE OF PRACTICE**

As indicated in the introduction the Board is finalising the development of a Code of Practice that will be available for viewing and comment by all Optometrists in late June 2004 on the Board's website. Any comments should be provided to the Board by 1 September 2004. This code will specify the required standards for competent and safe practice.

## **COMMITTEE OF OPTOMETRY REGULATING AUTHORITIES (CORA)**

CORA meets to coordinate and discuss common issues between the members. Current issues under discussion cover:

- Mutual and Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition.
- Therapeutic postgraduate courses.
- Certification of undergraduate University courses.
- Registration for overseas qualified applicants.
- Introduction of Therapeutics.
- Complaints and disciplinary handling.

Queensland will be hosting this years annual meeting of Australian and New Zealand Registration Boards, OAA and The Optometry Council on Monday 8 November 2004 at Hyatt Sanctuary Cove. The outcomes of this conference will be advised to registrants.

## **BOARD'S WEBSITE**

In 2004 it will be important to regularly view the Board's website as information on Therapeutics and DPA courses, Code of Practice and Recency of Practice will be made available.

## **DUTY TO NOTIFY THE BOARD OF CERTAIN MATTERS**

An amendment to the *Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999*, which came into force on 20 August 2001, makes it an offence for a registrant to fail to notify the Board of the following information:

- A conviction of an indictable offence
- A conviction of an offence under any health practitioner registration Act in *any* jurisdiction (including foreign countries)
- A judgment or settlement of a negligence matter to which the registrant is a party
- Disciplinary action or the cancellation, suspension or imposition of conditions or undertakings imposed on the registrant's registration under *any* health practitioner registration Act in any jurisdiction (including foreign countries).

Notification must be made (in a form approved under the above Act ) within 30 days of the event occurring as set out in the Act. Failure to notify the Board of this information makes an optometrist liable to a penalty of up to \$3,750 and/or disciplinary action.

Registrants are directed to sections 385A - 385C of the *Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999* for further information about this matter. This Act can be accessed on the website: <http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/Legislation.htm>

## **Correspondence to the Board should be addressed to:**

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