

# OBC: Opticians of British Columbia

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## Where Do We Go From Here? Moving Forward With Refracting

### Opticians Launching Research Project

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The Opticians Association of Canada and the Opticians of British Columbia are launching an important research project and we need YOUR help. Why are consumers at risk when purchasing eyeglasses and contact lenses on the Internet? We think we know the answer but can we prove it? We need to develop some data on what happens after they push that 'send' button on their Internet order and they plunk those optical products on their face. The best way to do that is to develop a data-gathering system. Compare the standards of accuracy for products purchased in the Internet with the standards used by Licensed Opticians. Evaluate the performance of the product.

There are two ways to get our hands on Internet product; evaluate and document the glasses and contact lenses brought to you by consumers who have purchased on the Internet OR make some Internet purchases ourselves. If we're rating risk of harm we need to develop a rating scale. i.e. if the optical centres are misaligned vertically thus creating prism what is the likelihood of harm? Is the risk as great with unwanted prism as it is with a cylinder being off axis? Does the risk increase according to the power of the prescription? According to the age of the wearer? Is there a risk of harm with Internet-ordered RGP lenses? Another element of risk is answering the question of

WHO is at risk? Just the wearer of the product? Are others at risk?

You can see that there are many layers to this matter but if we are to demonstrate to consumers that they will be making a better investment by opting to visit a Licensed Optician we need facts. Facts you can help us develop. This needs to be a well-coordinated effort so we can harvest the data in a meaningful way.

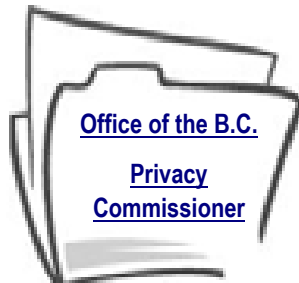
If you're interested in being on the Risk of Harm team please contact Kim McEachern at the OBC office. We need volunteers from all over the province. There are no face-to-face meetings required to participate. [kim@opticians.bc.ca](mailto:kim@opticians.bc.ca)

### What Information Do I Need to Provide?

Opticians in Canada must provide their clients with personal health information. Personal health information means recorded information about an identifiable individual that is related to the individual's health or the provision of health services to

the individual. This includes a PD, 'K' readings, a prescription, contact lens specifications and, in the case of refracting opticians in B.C., an assessment record. BUT what if someone who has not been your patient wants you to take a PD measurement? *You do not have to take that measurement for the person.* It may be part

of your business model to provide those services for a fee. In addition, refracting opticians must take a PD and note it on the assessment record. What is an assessment record? This is the term that the government has given to the results of the refraction that you perform as differentiated from the refraction performed by an optometrist.



## Where Do We Go From Here?

Since the announcement of our new Opticians Regulation there's been a lot of buzz in the province and right across Canada about the state of dispensing in B.C. Is it a disaster? Is it an opportunity? Are our licenses worth anything? What does 'right to title' mean? We have a choice. We can follow the folks who believe the sky is falling OR we can believe in ourselves and our profession enough to move forward. Opticians DO make a difference. The advice we give, the measurements we take, the standards we meet are important—even critical to the continued visual comfort and vi-

sion health of our clients. And now that we can also refract we are able to offer a truly integrated service. But you're not a refracting optician so how does this help you? You could become a refracting optician. Every additional credential you can collect makes you more valuable to your current employer and to future employers. But even if you choose not to the fact that you are regulated sets you apart. Right to title means that only someone who is regulated under the Opticians Regulation can be called an Optician. When you are regulated you are telling the public that you have not

only met the entrance level standard of practice but you continue to learn and to improve your skills through mandatory continuing education. When you are regulated the public knows you are accountable to your college and to your profession.

So, where do we go from here? That's entirely up to us. If we view ourselves as health care professionals, let's focus more on vision health. Let's at least balance our interest in fashion and price with our commitment to improving vision. And let's be united in that effort. Let's aim for excellence.

## You're an Expert!! And Now We're Telling That Story.

You've probably by now received your Licensed Optician pin in the mail and hopefully you've visited the Licensed Optician website to find out more about this PR project. This is a multi-year strategy to raise the profile of opticians and to educate people about the value in seeing an expert for their vision care needs. In the first phase we're telling people to "ask for a Licensed Opti-

**WATCH THE LICENSED OPTICIAN AD ON THE CBC, BOLD, DOCS, HGTV, BRAVO, ON THE LICENSED OPTICIAN WEBSITE AT LICENSEDOPTICIAN.CA AND ON YOUTUBE. COMMERCIAL TIMES ARE POSTED ON THE OBC WEBSITE.**



cian". Phase two will follow on with more of the story. We've also created a 'find an optician' section on the Licensed Optician website. All the consumer has to do is put in a postal code and

all the locations that employ licensed opticians in that area will pop up. We're counting on you to help us accurately populate this page. Check out the postal code in the area of your dispensary and e-mail us with any changes you want us to make. The website also educates consumers about the unique services provided by licensed opticians. The work of this project is being undertaken exclusively by volunteer labour. All the funds collected have been directed to the expenses of the PR campaign.

## Standard of Practice—Join the SurveyMonkey

The Standards of Practice for any professional group must reflect the best practice knowledge of the profession itself. It is for that reason that the OBC is developing an electronic survey that will be sent out via SurveyMonkey. It will also be available on our website. You will tell us what you believe needs to be included in the Standard of Practice for B.C. opticians. A Standard of Practice represents the level of practice

that you expect your fellow professionals to observe. Your standards are what set you apart from unregulated providers. It's why we tell consumers they will be shortchanged if they don't 'ask for a Licensed Optician'. If anybody falls short of that standard it damages the profession as a whole. The survey will be looking at not only the standards relative to refracting but also to the eyeglass and contact lens

standards. And when the standard is complete it will become a press release item informing the public that our profession is continually reviewing and assessing our performance. This is how we energize and elevate the profession. Make sure we have your personal e-mail address so you can participate.



## You're A Member of an Elite Group—In Canada & In the World!

B.C. Opticians have achieved what few other opticians have. They have increased their scope of practice to include refracting! Those who have long memories will not be able to recall a single thing that has had as much significance to opticians as the B.C. Opticians Regulation. Every other change to our practice model has been a reflection of business. We moved from medical buildings to shopping malls. We became price competitive



introducing 2 for 1 and even 3 for 1. We instituted one-hour service and scores of new formats of lenses. We've offered frame designs for every fashion taste. But these were all product-oriented changes. This is the first time the profession has progressed in a fundamental way. How can you benefit from this change?

The next intake of the NAIT/OAC Optical Sciences Programs (Eyeglasses, Advanced Practice Contact Lenses and Advanced Practice Sight Testing) and the NAIT/OAC

Automated Refracting Theory course is September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The application deadline for these courses is August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. Individuals interested in receiving more information about any of these courses, are to contact the Opticians Association of Canada [opticians.ca](http://opticians.ca) via email at [education@opticians.ca](mailto:education@opticians.ca) or via telephone at 1-800-847-3155. Although the price of the course has increased the OAC has decided to defer instituting that increase to give B.C. opticians an early opportunity to qualify themselves as refracting opticians.

## Ask A Licensed Optician

One of the most important pieces of information we have to get out there is that licensed opticians know a thing or two...or three. We are experts to whom consumers need to turn with their vision questions and from whom they can reliably receive service. You answer questions all the time in your dispensaries. Our expertise is what makes us different from Internet providers. We listen. We consider. We recommend. We follow up. Let's not wait for consumers to walk in our doors. Let's take it to the Internet. We're inviting our members to participate in a new online feature called

'Ask A Licensed Optician'. We'll invite consumers to input their question and their postal code and we'll identify a member optician from the expert panel in that area to provide a response. We'll post your response along with a profile of you and your dispensary. As a panel member your profile will stay posted. You can interact with the consumer and ask follow-up questions. Since the person has been identified as living in your area there's a good chance you'll gain a new customer. We're currently gathering panel members who want to participate. You must be an OBC member

and be willing to respond within 24 hours of receiving the question. This is a consumer education resource that's intended to benefit you-the OBC member but it also one of the many avenues Opticians need to use to show consumers that the right choice of a vision care provider is a licensed optician.



## Preserve Your Right to Refract

All refracting opticians must use due diligence when performing the automated refractions. There will be others who want this privileged scope of practice to be taken from us and they will be looking for us to falter. If you are a refracting optician, make sure you understand and perform the refractions as per Schedule: Limits and Conditions on the Conduct of Independent Automated Refractions, on pages 6 and 7 of the BC Opticians

New Regulations. You can find a copy of the regulations on the OBC website. Make sure you are observing the restrictions of age and medical conditions. You need to go through the pre-refraction questionnaire with every client and make sure they understand the need for an eye health examination with a frequency based on age as outlined in the Canadian Ophthalmological Society recommendations for otherwise healthy adults

(available on the OBC website). It will be ultimately important for opticians to be able to demonstrate a history of safe practice so you will no doubt be asked by the College to submit historical data on refractions you perform including follow-ups with your patients.



## Message from the OBC Office

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It has been a busy and exciting spring for opticians in BC. With the announcement of the new regulations by Health Minister Kevin Falcon on May 1, 2010 the Opticians of BC (OBC) and the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC) have been working together to supply you with accurate and helpful information. Everybody's instant reaction - including the OBC - was that of elation mixed with dismay. Giving the matter sober thought the OBC believed the responsible course of action was to set short term and long term goals. In the short term we believe it's important to leverage the positives coming out of this regulation. In the long term it is clear we need to work with B.C. opticians to find ways to limit the erosion by the Internet of our historical business model. In the pages of this newsletter we bring you some of the strategies we've been working on. Do we want the Minister to reverse the regulation? Frankly that would be a step backward. Opticians need to be able to refract in order to survive both in business and as professionals. Would we like to find a way to prevent the Internet from being able to supply the public with prescription eyewear. You bet! But the truth of the matter is that the Internet sellers are not going away. The key is to limit its market share. We have important work to do going forward and we need to do it with your help.

The question often raised is why do you want to become a member of an association? After much research it has been found people join for the following reasons:

**Amplify your voice.** Join your associations peers in advancing critical policy issues affecting your association sector in your province and communities.

**Make an Impact.** It's all about achieving your mission. With the right skills and tools, you can measure your associations effectiveness and communicate the value your association brings to your community.

**Build Your Capacity.** To lead and manage your association more effectively, attend trainings and conferences on essential topics such as fundraising, marketing, advocacy, governance, collaboration, managing of volunteers, building your board, technology and leadership skills. These opportunities take your association to its next level of operational growth, and help it achieve new outcomes.

**Join the Conversation.** Network with your peers: share ideas, and exchange solutions online. Volunteer.

**Grow! Learn Leadership Skills.** Acquire new skills, hear about trends that matter as you lead your association into the future, and as you strengthen your own leadership skills, help build a stronger association in your province.

**Save Money.** Benefit from discounts on products and services that are available only to members of the Opticians of BC and the Opticians of Canada Association.

**Save Time.** Get fast and reliable answers to you questions.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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## Frequently Asked Questions



The OBC was quick to start collecting all the questions B.C. opticians had about the new Opticians' Regulation and by mid-April we had posted a list of Frequently Asked Questions to our website.

Here are some of the questions asked. To see the responses visit the OBC website

[opticians.bc.ca](http://opticians.bc.ca)

- Is there an expiry date for contact lens specifications?
- After the sight test are we obligated to provide the results at no charge?
- Online ordering—if ordered online and it is a non-adapt who is responsible?
- Will the regulation affect wages and salaries in the future?
- Are there tolerances? How do you enforce tolerances on unregulated people?
- How do changes affect transfer of licensure across provinces?
- Is there a waiver of liability? Where does liability begin and end?
- Are you able to charge a fee for something you did prior to May 1st?
- Dr's changes—no charge? On optometrists Rxes it still says we must do it with no charge.

**Join the Dialogue by Submitting Your Questions**

[info@opticians.bc.ca](mailto:info@opticians.bc.ca)