



Council of New South Wales

Optometry Council of New South Wales newsletter

Edition 1, October 2016

President's Message

Welcome to the first edition of the newsletter of the Optometry Council of New South Wales.

The Optometry Council of New South Wales works hand-in-hand with the Health Care Complaints Commission to deal with complaints and notifications about the conduct, professional performance, health and competence (fitness to practise) of optometrists and optometric students in New South Wales.

The Council's primary role is to protect the health and safety of the public.

The Council came into existence on 1 July 2010 with the commencement of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. The Council functions in accordance with the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(NSW\)](#) and the [Health Practitioner Regulation \(New South Wales\) Regulation 2016](#).

The other members of the Council are:

- Mr John Davis – Practitioner member
- Mr Derek Fails – Practitioner member
- Ms Pauline O'Connor – Deputy President and Legal member

You can find out more about the Council by visiting the [website](#).

In this edition of the newsletter, we discuss two of the recurring themes that underlie a large number of complaints that the Council manages:

- communication with patients, and
- clinical record keeping.

This edition also highlights new infection control obligations for optometrists that came into effect on 1 September 2016, as well as the rights of patients to be provided with health information including their optical prescriptions.

I trust you will find the information in this edition useful and informative.

Albert Lee - President and practitioner member
Optometry Council of New South Wales

Communication with patients

A number of complaints have been made about optometrists failing to refer patients to an ophthalmologist. When the Council and the Health Care Complaints Commission investigated those sorts of complaints, we often found that the practitioner had exercised due skill, care and judgement, but had failed to effectively communicate with their patients.

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Clinical records

When a complaint has been made about an optometric service, the practitioner is usually asked to provide a response and a copy of the patient's clinical records. Often, the Health Care Complaints Commission and the Council agree that the practitioner has exercised appropriate care and diligence, and an agreement is reached to dismiss the complaint.

However, during the course of the assessment process, questions occasionally arise about the standard of the clinical record and this triggers a separate sequence of events, which may include requiring the practitioner to attend a meeting of the Council for the purpose of counselling.

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Infection control standards

Optometrists practising in New South Wales are required to comply with the infection control standards that are contained at [Schedule 3 of the Health Practitioner Regulation \(New South Wales\) Regulation 2016](#). The standards are not optometry-centric, however, *Part 4: Processing of instruments and equipment* is of particular relevance to optometrists.

[Read more...](#)

Patients' rights to access health information

Division 3 of the [Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002](#) imposes a statutory responsibility on practitioners to provide individuals with access to their health information.

[Read more...](#)

Contact us

web: www.optometrycouncil.nsw.gov.au

email: newsletter@optometrycouncil.nsw.gov.au

phone: 1300 197 177

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