

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Registration Committee

DATE: October 5, 2020

SUBJECT: 6.1 Amendment to Contact Lens Fittings Policy

For Decision

For Information

Monitoring Report

Purpose:

To provide the Board of Directors with considerations for amendment of the Contact Lens Fittings policy to expand the peer-to-peer provision to eyeglass fits.

Background:

At the meeting on May 2, 2016, the Registration Committee considered a request from the educational institutions to expand its policy surrounding contact lens fitting and to facilitate peer-to-peer fits given the changes that have occurred in the optical industry. The Committee approved the Applicant [Contact Lens Fittings Policy](#) on January 30, 2017, allowing students to obtain contact lens fits via Peer to Peer role play or standardized patients.

Recently, a concern has been raised by the educational institutions and other stakeholders regarding significant challenges faced by students in acquiring the required fits due to the shortage of student placements for all types of fittings. This was identified as a barrier, as during the current circumstances not all dispensaries are in a position to hire students due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID -19 pandemic. The College was subsequently asked to assist in facilitating student fits in order to avoid undue delays in their registration with the College.

For Consideration:

In light of the concerns identified by educational program coordinators and other stakeholders about student fittings, the Committee is recommending the adoption of an addendum to the Contact Lens Fittings Policy to temporarily permit up to 25% of eyeglass fits to be performed on a “peer-to-peer” or standardized patient basis (i.e. on a person not actually seeking opticianry care, who portrays the personal/medical history, physical symptoms, emotional characteristics and everyday concerns of an actual patient. Applicants will be required to complete the balance of eyeglass fits on actual/retail patients in a dispensary setting. If approved, this temporary provision would remain in effect until December 31, 2020, at which time the Committee can re-assess the situation.

In the Committee’s view, this addendum will address the challenges identified while still ensuring that applicants have demonstrated hands-on patient experience with respect to eyeglass fittings.

Public Interest Considerations:

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a number of challenges for current and newly graduated opticianry students. The College has a mandate to ensure that it continues to register qualified and competent opticians to ensure patient safety, and that it does so in a manner that does not create unnecessary or excessive barriers to registration.

Recommendation/Action Required:

That the Board approve the proposed amendments to the Contact Lens Fittings Policy as recommended by the Registration Committee.

REGISTRATION POLICY

Applicant Contact Lens Fittings

Applicant Contact Lens Fitting Requirement

It is an exemptible requirement under Section 5 (2)3. of Ontario Regulation 869/93, that any applicant applying for a certificate of registration as a Registered Optician must have,

“completed, and must present evidence of, at least twenty contact lens fittings, including at least five rigid gas permeable (RGP) contact lens fittings, under the supervision or direction of an optician who is certified in the fitting of contact lenses or an optometrist or an ophthalmologist.”

The contact lens fitting requirement ensures that Registered Opticians possess the required entry-to-practice knowledge, skills, and judgement in contact lens fitting in order to provide safe and effective patient care.

RGP Definition

For the purposes of this policy, a RGP lens is defined as a contact lens where any portion of the lens is made of rigid or semi-rigid materials. This would include, but is not limited to, hybrid and scleral lenses.

Criteria for Acceptable Contact Lens Fitting

Normally, contact lens fittings are acquired during the course of completing accredited opticianry education and are monitored by the accredited opticianry program. For the purposes of registration with the College of Opticians of Ontario, an acceptable contact lens fitting must meet the following criteria:

1. One complete fit must include each of the following fitting steps:
 - a) Obtaining and documenting the patient’s health history
 - b) Performing the initial fit
 - c) Conducting a follow-up visit

It is not a requirement that steps a, b, and c be performed on the same patient, provided that all three steps are performed.

2. Patients: The fitting may be performed on “patients” that are either,
 - a) Actual/retail patients in a dispensary setting: refers to real patients who are actually seeking opticianry care, and who are appropriate candidates for contact lenses.

- b) Peer to Peer role-play/standardized patients in a classroom or dispensary setting: refers to a person, not actually seeking opticianry care, who portrays the personal/medical history, physical symptoms, emotional characteristics and everyday concerns of an actual patient.
3. Supervision for Soft Contact Lenses: A soft contact lens fit for any patient type must be supervised by an optician who is recognized with the College of Opticians of Ontario as either a soft contact lens mentor, or a certified contact lens fitter (CCLF) who is also a soft contact lens mentor. The supervision may also be done by an optometrist or ophthalmologist registered with a regulatory College. The supervisor is required to sign the student logbook verifying that the fit took place. The supervisor must comply with the Student and Intern Supervision Policy.
 4. Supervision for RGP Contact Lenses: A rigid contact lens fit for any patient type must be supervised by an optician who is recognized with the College of Opticians of Ontario as either a rigid contact lens mentor, or a certified contact lens fitter (CCLF) who is also a rigid mentor. The supervision may also be done by an optometrist or ophthalmologist registered with a regulatory College. The supervisor is required to sign the student log-book verifying that the fit took place. The supervisor must comply with the Student and Intern Supervision Policy.
 5. Follow-up Visits: A complete fit, for any patient type, must include a follow-up visit. The follow-up visit must include the collection of subjective and objective information about the patient's contact lens wear, in accordance with the College's standards of practice.

Temporary Addendum to the Contact Lens Fittings Policy

From October 5, 2020 to December 31, 2020, the following rules shall govern eyeglass fittings that are performed for the purpose of meeting the requirements of section 5(2)3 of Ontario Regulation 869/93:

- a. At least 75% of fits must be performed on actual/retail patients in a dispensary setting (real patients who are actually seeking opticianry care) .
- b. Up to 25% of fits may be performed on Peer to Peer role-play/standardized patients in a classroom or dispensary setting (person not actually seeking opticianry care who portrays the personal/medical history, physical symptoms, emotional characteristics and everyday concerns of an actual patient).