

ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS IRELAND

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A CODE OF ETHICS AND PRACTICE FOR OPTOMETRISTS

A Code of Ethics for Optometrists sets out the principles by which we conduct our relationship with those for whom we provide services, including the provision of necessary appliances.

As the Council is the duly elected representative group for the Association, it is proper that this Council should give guidance to the profession on matters of ethics and professional conduct.

The integrity of the profession as a whole must be established and maintained in order that those seeking our services will have trust in our advice, the acceptance of which could be critical for their visual welfare.

The general consideration of the Code of Ethics is that all dealings of the practitioner, both in the public and business domains, should reflect the highest standards of the profession.

CODE OF ETHICS

- 1: Professional integrity is concerned with the duty to put the interests of patients first in all circumstances and above all other considerations.**
- 2: Every practitioner should be constantly aware that the public's perception of them reflects on the profession as a whole. Every member should therefore conduct their affairs so as to give the best public perception of the profession as a whole.**
- 3: It is the duty of all practitioners to maintain and expand their professional competence throughout their careers, since only in this way can they continue to offer the best possible service to the public.**
- 4: The confidentiality of information divulged by the patient should be clearly understood to be a cornerstone of the practitioner - patient relationship.**
- 5: The patient's best interests and the practitioner's career security are best served by the obligation to have professional indemnity insurance.**
- 6: Practitioners should attract recommendation by the quality of the professional services they provide.**
- 7: It is unethical to denigrate the professional ability or quality of practice of fellow practitioners.**
- 8: It is unethical to allow personal, business or professional behaviour or conduct to bring the profession into disrepute.**
- 9. All advertising must comply with the Code of the Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland.**

CODE OF PRACTICE

- 12: Those seeking our services should be accorded our full attention and abilities, irrespective of their status or ability to pay.**
- 13: The services offered by the optometrist should be provided in a suitably equipped and maintained environment, with appropriate support staff and affording privacy to the patient.**
- 14: When providing eye examinations for the public it should be borne in mind that the objectives of the examination are:**
- (a) To specify functional corrections for defects of sight.**
 - (b) To detect ocular abnormality and take appropriate action.**
 - (c) To give advice about appropriate lighting and other matters beneficial to the use of the sense of sight.**
 - (d) To suggest or provide remedial visual training where appropriate.**

All such examinations should be carried out thoroughly in relation to the needs of the patient.

- 15: Examination findings should be recorded at the time of the assessment. It cannot be assumed that the relevant test was carried out if details are not entered on the record. Where computers are used, backups should be made and legal obligations under the Data Protection Act understood. RECORDS SHOULD NOTE ALL VISITS OF THE PATIENT.**
- 16: When a referral is appropriate it is essential to provide clear written referral document for use by the clinician who receives the referred patient.**
- 17: Referral letters should be legible and include all relevant information. A copy should be sent to the G.P. if the patient is referred directly to an ophthalmologist or hospital.**
- 18: The practitioner should indicate clearly any charges that may be due for the consultation and the costs associated with the dispensing function. It is advisable to inform patients of the total costs before they leave the practice.**
- 18: Charges should be fair to the patient and the practitioner; should reflect the true value of the service and the product and should be sufficient to maintain a high standard of practice as indicated in "13" in this Code.**

- 19: Patients should be advised of the necessity for and the extent of the after-care appropriate for the spectacles and contact lenses; any additional charges should also be indicated.**
- 20: The need for further visits or referrals should only be considered in the interest of the patient.**
- 21: Where a patient, whose dispensed appliances were prescribed by another practitioner, reports non-tolerance, it is incumbent on the optometrist, with the agreement of the patient, to endeavour to report the matter to the prescriber and agree on a course of action. The matter should be entered on the patient's record.**
- 22: The nature of contact lens practice is such that continuous developments in materials and solutions demand that practitioners stay abreast of these changes. All engaged in such practice should have the equipment necessary and facilities for disinfection of trial lenses.**
- 23: Members are reminded that, apart from ethical and practical considerations, by the terms of their Agreements with the Department of Social Welfare, they and their staff MUST be covered by Professional Indemnity Insurance in order to engage in any work under the Optical Benefit Scheme administered by that Department.**
- 24: Members are responsible for the actions and statements of their staff in the practice. They must therefore ensure that all employees have training and information appropriate to their work and recognise their limitations in the professional field.**

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