



MEDIA RELEASE

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The College of Opticians of British Columbia applauds British Columbia's New Prescription Release Regulations

Vancouver March 27, 2009 -- As of March 1, 2009 a new regulation ensures all eye health professionals in British Columbia must offer every patient a copy of his or her prescription at the end of an eye health exam or sight test.

The new regulation requires that a copy of a prescription for eyeglasses be given to a patient free of charge and that the prescription not state or imply that only an optometrist can dispense eyeglasses. If contact lenses are fitted by an optometrist using the prescription information, a copy of the contact lens specifications must also be given to the patient free of charge.

Nick Atkinson, Registrar of the College of Opticians of BC (COBC), said "By giving British Columbians free access to their prescriptions, the government is expanding the range of eye care service options available to consumers while ensuring patient safety. I congratulate Minister Abbott for moving forward with this new regulation.

Kent Ashby the COBC board chair said, "I am encouraged by the government's throne speech commitment to ensure health-care providers have the opportunity to utilize their full scope of training and expertise."

Atkinson points out that the COBC has a duty under the Health Professions Act to promote and enhance the ability of its registrants to respond and adapt to changes in practice environments, advances in technology and other emerging issues.

The COBC is working with opticians and the BC government to continue enhancing access to quality eye health care professionals. Opticians in BC design and fit eyeglasses and contact lenses for the health and safety of British Columbians. Opticians have the education and training to use automated refractors for sight testing, to determine the power of corrective lenses needed by their clients. Sight tests only measure the refractive error of the person's eyes not eye health. Eye health exams assess the medical health of a patient's eyes and can only be performed by an optometrist, or by a medical doctor such as an ophthalmologist.

The COBC was established in 1994 and has a duty to serve and protect the public, as well as to exercise its powers and fulfill its responsibilities in the public interest. One of the main roles of self-regulating health professions is ensuring that comprehensive ongoing competency regimes are in place to ensure that members of the profession practice safely. You can find out more about the COBC and services and duties of registered opticians at www.cobc.ca by clicking on "public information."

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