



**COLLEGE of OPTICIANS
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**
a B.C. Health Regulator

Always Learning

Mar 2011

Always learning - Keeping your membership on a distinguished team

The Government of British Columbia (BC) insists that once you are on the register of opticians you must keep current with your professional knowledge to stay on that register. There are many terms used to describe this requirement. Such terms include continued competency, continuing education, mandatory continuing education (MCE) and credits. They all describe the requirement of "continued learning." Continued learning is not a voluntary action for health professionals. This is understandable. If your doctor graduated in 1956 and has taken no further training since then, s/he certainly may not be that knowledgeable on the latest innovations and treatments. Wouldn't you want to be assured that you could count on the health professionals you seek care from to be giving you the best advice possible?

Opticians need to be aware of new techniques and knowledge that may impact eye care and the services they render to healthcare consumers. In addition, consumers have the right to expect that health professionals are continually learning and not relying on knowledge gained when they first entered the profession. And as an optician don't you *want* the public to know that you continue to research and learn about products and skills that are going to help them?

The College of Opticians of British Columbia (the "College") has always had requirements for members to demonstrate continued learning. Under the new regulation, the continued learning requirement remains unchanged. The only difference now is that those who are certified to refract must reach into an expanded body of knowledge to demonstrate their competency.

Instead of being generalists, let's concentrate on special areas of practice

So how can we best take advantage of the requirement that we undertake continued learning? Opticians have always been generalists - providing all things for all people. When consumers want children's glasses, they go see an optician. When consumers want progressive lenses, they go see an optician. Right now opticians practice within three general areas - eyeglasses, contact lenses and refracting. But, within those areas are special areas of practice that opticians can identify and in which they can become expert.

With eyeglasses there are special areas of practice such as pediatrics, post cataract, computer vision, low vision, eye safety, sport vision and sun vision. With contact lenses there is dry eye, presbyopia, post natal care, orthoptics, keratoconus, RPG and ortho-k. In refracting, why not have a special area of practice in community vision screening. There are no limits to special areas of practice.

With so many special areas of practice opticians have an opportunity to become distinctive and offer specialized services to the public. Why stop at having one specialty, why not have two, or three, or four? Becoming certified in multiple special areas of practice not only increases your value to the public but makes you more competent as a professional.

Education and credentialing

The College is already working to recognize special areas of practice and has created mechanisms to help BC opticians shape their own continued learning. In the future, the College's online registry will help healthcare consumers find specific opticianry services. For example, if a consumer is looking for an optician who has special knowledge in pediatric opticianry in their community, they can easily locate one through the online registry. If a consumer needs to find an optician who deals with low vision? No problem. Consumers can select low vision and the College registry will list all opticians that have been educated and obtained certification for low vision care.

Courses to educate opticians in specialized areas are already being developed. The College is interested in developing the areas of practice that most interest BC opticians as well as the new emerging areas of practice for BC opticians. Please submit your specialty area suggestions to: cchong@cobc.ca.

The College registry is your best business and personal marketing tool; it's your seal of approval.

With or without the definition of special areas of practice the government of BC recognizes that opticians play an important role in helping consumers find licensed opticians - professionals who work to strict standards. The government, through the College ensures that there is a register of practicing licensed opticians. The register is available online and it lists only those people who are registered with the College.

Your consumers, your employer, and even your potential employers will want to know that you are competent. While consumers can find people that sell eyewear on lists such as the Yellow Pages, those lists don't differentiate the qualified from the unqualified. Only the College's exclusive register assures the safe choice of a licensed optician.

The register is available to the public through two websites. The first web site is the [COBC website](#). If you have not ever visited the College web site now is a good time to.

- Look for "**Find an Optician**" on the homepage.
- Play with the search menu until you understand what an important information tool the register is for you and your consumer.

Also, you can now [manage your online optician profile](#) on the COBC website:

- The password you received in the mail last week with your [2011 registration renewal](#) form will allow you to log on and add special information about yourself.
- You will notice that there is an opportunity for you to tell your consumers more about yourself.
- You can add the languages you speak as well as areas of expertise.

The second web site is the [Licensed Optician website](#). This site is a little different - it allows potential consumers to find opticians close to where they live or work.

- Go to the web site.
- Click on the menu bar "**About Opticians.**"
- Scroll down to "**Find a Local Optician.**"
- Once you are on the searchable database, type in a postal code, town or street address.

- Find your name and locate your practice on the map.

Only Canadian licensed opticians appear in this directory.

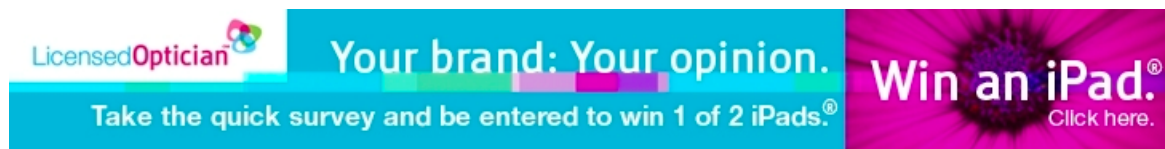
If you are on the register it means that your qualifications have been reviewed and validated by a regulatory body. This means that you are competent to dispense without someone giving you instructions, checking all your work or making decisions for you. In your case that authority is the College.

Opticians have the tools at hand to distinguish themselves through the College's licensing and certification processes and by embracing special areas of practice. The register and searchable online databases identify to your future and returning consumers and even your employer or potential employers that you are a licensed optician - highly trained, skilled, and ethical.

Your Brand, Your Opinion - Win an iPad

Last year we worked with the Opticians Council of Canada to create a brand to raise awareness about our profession. The first national public awareness campaign just completed its run on national TV.

We recognize the success of the brand depends on a groundswell of Opticians taking it up. So before our next national awareness campaign, we want to hear what you know about the brand, what's working and what would work better, so we can shape how we move forward and ensure the brand supports Opticians the way you need it to.



[Take the survey](#) and ensure your opinion is part of a stronger brand for our profession. Completing the survey enters you into a draw for **one of two iPads®** or a Licensed Optician branded item.

Your input will be kept confidential. [Follow this link](#) to the survey and thank you for your time!
Deadline to complete the survey is March 16, 2011.

If you haven't already, sign up at www.licensedoptician.ca to access brand tools and be kept in the loop on upcoming campaign information.



Upcoming Continuing Education Events

1) Wednesday, March 9, 2011 - Licensed Optician Focus Group Session

Location: COBC Office, Suite 420 - 2025 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC

Time: 6:30PM - 7:30PM

Credits: 3 EC

The success of the national public awareness campaign is dependent on a critical mass of opticians who deeply believe the brand reinforces their worth, differentiates them and supports their business. To help us further engage opticians, we need your input.

If you would like to participate in this one hour focus group session worth 3 EC credits, please sign up by emailing a RSVP to Connie Chong, Assistant Registrar at cchong@cobc.ca by Tuesday, March 8, 2011 at 4PM PST.

2) Sunday, March 20, 2011 - [Opticians Of British Columbia](#) (OBC) Continuing Education Day

Location: Douglas College, 700 Royal Avenue, New Westminster

Time: 8:30AM - 4:30PM

Credits: At least 11 credits (final accreditation to be announced)

Speakers: To be announced

For more information or to register, please contact the the OBC association by email info@opticians.bc.ca.

Registration Renewal 2011

The 2011 COBC registration renewal package was mailed last week. If you do not receive a renewal package by the beginning of next week, please contact us at 604-278-7510.

The COBC is now accepting online registration and renewal. You can renew your registration and manage your profile online.

(Please note that online renewal is currently only offered to those registrants paying by Visa or MasterCard).

Follow these simple instructions to renew your registration online:

1. Go to www.cobc.ca
2. Click "**Login**" and then click "**Online Registration & Renewal**"



3. You will be presented with a list of registration options. Choose "**Renewal**" and then click "**Proceed**".

4. Enter the unique login information you received in your 2011 registration renewal package and click "**Login**"
5. Update and/or verify your personal and business information. Once the form is complete enter your payment information and click "Submit". Your renewal will be submitted electronically. **You are not required to submit any paper to the COBC.**
6. After your renewal has been processed by the COBC office, a confirmation note and receipt will be emailed to the email address you provided in your online profile. You will receive your stickers and decal in the mail.

Please use this new feature to manage your COBC profile throughout the year. You can easily update your personal information, home address and employment information. You can also change your password to something you can easily remember. All these features are available by clicking "Manage My Profile" on the "Registration Options" page when you login to your profile.

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