
Subject: Consultation document re therapeutic qualification for Optometrists
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It is without question that there is a public benefit having Optometrists therapeutically qualified. At this stage, the general public is not fully aware that Optometrists have therapeutic qualifications. As this awareness changes along with the public expectation of the skills possessed by Optometrists it may be necessary to ensure greater compliance with public expectations. I expect this to be a natural evolution within the optometry profession. I do not think that compulsion or a time frame is necessary.

I do not agree that mandatory therapeutic qualification is necessary for currently practicing Optometrists. A comparison can be made to the diagnostic drug qualification in the past. Initially the qualification was post graduate, then was incorporated into the Optometry degree. The majority of optometrists did obtain the qualification, and in time, plus through attrition due to retirement, the qualification was the norm. I see the same scenario as a reasonable expectation in regard to therapeutic qualification. My major concern is that in order for currently practicing optometrists to obtain therapeutic qualification, the demands of the course in regard to clinical hours need to be made reasonably attainable for country practitioners in particular.

Overseas trained optometrists should be required to hold therapeutic qualifications in line with newly graduated Australian optometrists. A two tiered system would definitely be created with a scenario that non-therapeutically overseas trained optometrists could be newly registered.

Yours faithfully,

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Murwillumbah