
Subject: Optometry and therapeutics
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I am Ian Douglas Chapman - registered Optometrist.

Regarding the question of therapeutics as a requirement for registration, my views are these:

Of course having Optometrists with therapeutic qualifications is a benefit to the public. Given that the current practicality of "up-skilling" the 3,200 registered Optometrists who do not currently have Therapeutic qualifications is impossible within 10 years, possibly much longer, I would suggest any time frame on introducing therapeutic skill necessity for registration in less than 15-20 years, is totally impractical.

Insisting on therapeutic qualifications for in-coming overseas Optometrists is another question. It would benefit the public, but also enhance the status of local Optometrists by limiting competition for employment. As the current population of Optometrists is at a good level - though granted the regional distribution is way off - [according to OAA and I believe them!], there is no argument for doing anything which allows overseas Optometrists to easily gain work permits for Australia. The problem of shortages of professionals outside metro areas has been a problem for many years in most professions, and won't be solved easily - many have been trying for a long time already. Most of this issue is of course separate to the line of these enquiries - simply we are not in need of overseas Optometrists - thus no need to make it easy.

I would further suggest, that as the "government" moves in a direction of insisting on therapeutically qualified Optometrists, they concurrently elevate the scheduled fees for Optometrists to reflect the higher level of skills and expertise being required.

Finally, I have my 60th birthday in early March - I will NEVER do a therapeutics course.

Ian Chapman