

Newsletter

April 2009

NOVA SCOTIA COLLEGE OF DISPENSING OPTICIANS

Note From The Chair:

Our AGM will soon be upon us and I want to state I am enjoying my term so far as Chair of the College. I am often asked, "What does the Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians actually do?" That's a great question! The reality is that even though Opticians have a long-term relationship with the College, most opticians only contact the College once maybe twice a year. Once, to inquire how many professional development credits they have on file and once for registration renewal. Usually both of these occasions create some grumbling from the licensee and prompt the question "what does the NSCDO actually do for me?"

Mostly the work of the College focuses on standards of care and accountability to the public. This is an impressive phrase, but what does it actually mean? A "Standard of Practice" is something that you apply to all your patients. Opticians are highly trained health professionals and have a good relationship with the public of Nova Scotia. A recent Ipsos Reid Survey conducted by the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC) found that Nova Scotians have a positive attitude towards Opticians. While you may take your opticianry skills for granted, you may wish to reflect on how you acquired so much knowledge. Many of you, like me, completed the Canadian Guild Course while others completed NAIT/OAC or Success College program here in Nova Scotia. Each of these programs has a commonality; the curricula were developed on standards set by the NSCDO. The College helped identify competencies an Optician must have to provide care to the public in Nova Scotia. The College then ensures you are able to deliver these services. In doing so the NSCDO meets nationally with the teaching institutions and conducts an in-depth review of

the optical programs to make sure they are current and up to date. To ensure the training courses are doing their job well, the NSCDO conducts examinations to allow successful candidates to enter the profession here in Nova Scotia. In reality, by the time you are newly registered as an Optician in Nova Scotia you have been under supervision of the NSCDO for about two to three years and the job of the College is about 50% complete at that point in time.

The next step to maintain a high standard of care is the continuing education requirement. The Government of Nova Scotia has mandated continuing education for all professions in the province. Once again the work of the College is silent and behind the scenes. Although registrants demonstrate to the College they have met requirements at registration time, this is usually the easy part for NSCDO administration.

The difficult part is working with the recognized education providers to make sure that adequate programs are available and enduring that the topics meet College Standards. The Professional Development Committee works hard to ensure the approved professional development programs are acceptable. That just leaves the explanation of "accountability". Rightfully, only a small portion of the College's time is spent with accountability and complaints. Opticians maintain high standards of care because of the excellent training they have received. Complaints should be and are the exception rather than the norm.

The Board of Directors of the College met several times since the AGM last May. I am pleased to report the newly elected Board of Directors have been attending to important

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matters since elected to serve. The College has been active provincially as well as nationally and a detailed report will be presented at the Annual General Meeting on May 3, 2009 at the Holiday Inn, Dartmouth NS.

Respectfully Submitted

Robert Macleod; Chair, NSCDO

Nomination Committee

The Dispensing Opticians' Act, section 5, states the Board of Directors is composed of: (a) Chair, Past Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, (b) three other persons at least two of whom hold a practising license and (c) no fewer than two and no more than three persons appointed by the Governor in Council; with this being said we have two seats available on the Board of Directors, one has to be a licensed Dispensing Optician. On May 3, 2009, I will be calling for Nominations from the floor to try and fill at least one of these seats.

If you are interested in letting your name stand for election please contact John Butler at: (902) 455-4305. According to the by-laws a nominee needs two members of the College to endorse their nomination as a candidate for a position on the Board of Directors of the NSCDO.

John Butler; Chair, Nomination Committee

Mandatory Liability Insurance

Included on your renewal registration form was a "Declaration of Being Insured" to verify to the College you carry professional liability insurance. Government has mandated health professionals must carry liability insurance of not less than one million dollars. It's your responsibility to ensure a policy is in effect for the **full** current registration term (April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010).

A new declaration must be provided on an annual basis as part of the Renewal Process. Non-practicing members must also sign an undertaking that as non-practicing registrant you will not engage in the practice of Opticianry in

the Province of Nova Scotia. Professional liability insurance is available through the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC). The OAC offers members liability insurance at a competitive rate of \$75.00 per year, for three million dollars of coverage or \$90.00 per year for five million dollars. The policy protects a member from lawsuits being brought against them as a result of professional negligence. Just a reminder, the insurance supplied by the OAC runs from January 1st to December 31st and it's your responsibility to renew your policy otherwise, you risk violating the NS Dispensing Opticians Act by not having a policy in place for the duration of the registration year. This violation could result in disciplinary action being brought against you by the College

At the moment, most provinces require Opticians and all health care professionals to carry Professional Liability Insurance.

Professional Development Requirements

The continuing education credit requirements have changed for the next registration year (2010-2011). Opticians will require eight (8) professional development credits to register next year and the number of required credits for contact lens fitters has increase to ten (10).

The College has revised the Professional Development Guidelines and a copy of the new document is included with this newsletter.

A credit is awarded for attending the NSCDO and NSSDO Annual General Meetings (AGM). The College has also introduced credits for participation in Opticianry Organizations for serving as educators, committee members of the College and/or the Society at the provincial or national level. Please read the enclosed information, any questions should be directed to the College if further clarification is necessary.

e-mail; nscdo@ns.aliantzinc.ca

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Marion Landers Ripley, Professional Development

Complaints Committee

I am pleased to report that we have been rather inactive. In the last year there were 3 complaints, of which two were found to have no grounds to continue and the complainant withdrew the third complaint.

Rob Billard, Chair

Examination Committee

On November 22, 08 the Province of Nova Scotia hosted the NACO Eyeglass Exam at Eastern Optical in Dartmouth. The 14 Candidates were from NS, BC AB, ON, NB and NL. On November 23, 08 we held the Contact Lens Exam with 8 Candidates again from many provinces. Ms. Jodi Dobbs, NACOR Moderator for both exams.

Christine Campbell, Chair

NACOR Report 2008

In May, 2008 the accreditation pilot was completed with “Georgian College Opticianry Program” receiving full accreditation. The goal now for NACOR is to have all optician programs complete the accreditation process by the end of 2009. This accreditation process has taken many years to complete but will give all provinces, that signed the Mutual Recognition Agreement, confidence knowing that all pathways into our profession will have the same high quality training when completed. It should be noted that Nova Scotia’s involvement in this Mutual Recognition Agreement allows opticians to be recognized in another province, but the optician must personally contact the other province and obtain licensing before they begin to practice in that province. The “Entry to Practice Competencies for Canadian Opticians” document contains both theoretical and practical

components and has been used by Regulators, Educators, individual members and the Professional Association for various purposes. The profile, along with a blueprint, provides a foundation for the now national exams (eyeglasses and contacts) and is used as a tool to accredit academic programs.

NACOR will implement to redevelop its current competency profile. This process would include, among other factors, a literature review of best practices in the industry, followed by a list of recommendations regarding the project. The current competency profile is five years old and requires revalidation to ensure that it remains relevant and reflects current practice requirements.

Tom Burlock, NSCDO Representative to NACOR

Sight Testing Committee Report

The Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians started its sight-testing initiative with a newly formed Sight-Testing Committee. There have been preliminary meetings with government to discuss the inclusion of automated sight-testing within the scope of practice of Nova Scotia Opticians.

The NSCDO is not requesting inclusion of eye health examinations in their scope of practice. Only Ophthalmologists, Medical Doctors and Optometrists are qualified to perform these procedures. Unbundling of sight-testing services from eye-health examinations provide a safe, more economical and accessible choice to the consumer. Trained sight-testing opticians could service their clients with minor updates to their corrective lens powers between eye health examinations. British Columbia and Alberta Opticians have been successfully performing automated sight-tests for over a decade.

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The NSCDO recognizes and supports eye health examinations for clients within the screening guidelines provided by the Canadian Ophthalmological Society (COS). The COS suggests low risk patients exhibiting no symptoms of underlying eye health or systemic problems, comprehensive eye health examinations should be conducted on individuals aged 19-40 years once every 10 years. An individual age 41-55 years once every 5 years and for individuals age 55-65 years at least once every 3 years. The NSCDO proposes that sight - testing services can be offered by its members for individuals between 19-64 years of age who have had a previous eye health examination within the above guidelines endorsed by the COS.

The Nova Scotia Society of Dispensing Opticians will offer in October 2009, the NAIT/OAC 12 week on-line Automated Sight-Testing Program to Nova Scotia Optician. The final written examination will be held in December 2009 at a yet to be announced Nova Scotia venue. The NSCDO has endorsed the NAIT/OAC continuing program and has awarded it fourteen (14) professional development credits. The course consists of four on-line modules or logs. A continuing education certificate will be issued by the OAC for each of the four logs you successfully complete. Once the final exam is written and a completion certificate is issued by NAIT, you will receive ten (10) professional development credits and an exemption from doing continuing education for the following NSCDO registration year. The College's position is that your education is current and up to date you are thus exempt for one (1) year for doing the Automated Refracting Course. This course is designed as an instruction vehicle for those Opticians requiring a training pathway for automated refracting certification.

In conclusion, regulated automated sight testing by opticians is in the public interest. It is safe, economical, accessible and most importantly provides the consumer with an alternate choice for a sight test.

Greg Gillam

Contact Information

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Board of Directors

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Atlantic Canada Exam Schedule:

June 13-14, 2009, Saint John, New Brunswick

November 7-8, 2009 Halifax, NS

June 12-13, 2010 Halifax, NS

All other dates and locations are posted on the NACOR website.