



OPTOMETRIST BOARD OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY NEWSLETTER APRIL 2009

MEET THE BOARD

Mr Bill Robertson	Chair
Ms Tess Presswell	Member
Mr Lance Chin	Member
Mr Rollo Manning	Public Member
Mr Sarjeet Gill	Public Member

BOARD SUPPORT

Ms Jill Huck	Registrar
Ms Kiara Garrard	Research & Policy
Ms Megan Lawton	Complaints Manager
Ms Julie Burrows	Registrations

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2009.

A lot of the Board activities at present are directed toward the transition to National Registration planned for July 2010. The concept seems obvious and there is little argument that a national system is the best way forward to promote a more flexible and efficient workforce. However the complicated detail involved in changing eight sets of State and Territory legislation not to mention the policy development of the new registration and accreditation bodies is mind blowing!

It was with pleasure that we as a Board approved another Optometrist for therapeutic authorization in March 2009. Emily Procopis in Alice Springs becomes the 9th Optom in the NT to gain the TPA—Congratulations Emily. This is a great achievement for the NT as it represents 40% of the regularly practising Optometrists having TPA. To put this in context, Victoria has had therapeutic access for over 10 years and also has an uptake of 40% of Optometrists with TPA. The expansion of the PBS list for optometrists is also very welcome news to patients who can now access subsidized eye drops for anterior eye conditions treated by Optometrists.

Hopefully all NT Optometrists are finding ways to maintain the recommended CPD levels each year. The options are far greater than before with remote, online, CD-Rom, journal and other innovations being alternatives to attendance at conferences to accrue the hours of learning. The annual practicing certificate application asks the question as to the meeting of O.A.A. CPD requirements so we are all faced with the

need to ensure our skills and knowledge is being updated regularly.

Best Wishes

Bill Robertson (Chair)

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

The Board has recently reviewed some policies and guidelines. These included:

- Authorisation to practise in a restricted practice area Ocular Therapeutics
- Entitlement to Registration

You can keep up to date at anytime by going to the Board's webpage at:

www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards

SCHEDULED BOARD MEETING DATES

Please note that applications for registration and other information that is to be considered at a Board meeting must be received no less than two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting date.

The Board cannot guarantee that documents received after this date will be addressed at the next scheduled meeting. Late documents will be assessed for the level of urgency. Should your matter be urgent please contact the Board as soon as possible.

Meeting dates scheduled for 2009:

11 June
13 August
12 November

OCULAR THERAPEUTICS

The Therapeutics Advisory Committee (TAC) meets every 6 months to review prescribing trends in the NT and also discuss any relevant issues. The results of past meetings have been the addition of the Fluoroquinolone Antibiotics in December 2007 and the implementation of the Shared Care Model for Glaucoma Management in June 2008.

At the last TAC meeting in November 2008 some concern was raised as to whether therapeutically qualified Optometrists were staining the cornea prior to prescribing steroids. Those Optometrists present stressed that this is considered normal practice and is in accordance with the Ocular therapeutic protocols, however it was agreed that for purposes of reporting that a check box for

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corneal staining would be added to the quarterly reporting sheet. The new reporting format sheet will be forwarded to therapeutically qualified Optometrists in the near future.

The information provided by therapeutically qualified Optometrists each quarter is collated into a statistical pie chart by the board representative and distributed to members of the TAC for review. Not only is this information useful to look at general prescribing trends but it provides information in regards to the number of scripts written and the utilisation of the service by the public.

Article by Asha Mahasuria, TAC Member

There are currently nine (9) optometrists in the NT who are therapeutically authorised practitioners. Therapeutically authorised practitioners are required to maintain prescribing records and report their prescribing to the Board quarterly. The reports are reviewed by a Therapeutics Advisory Committee, responsible for recommending to the Board any amendments to the formulary required by changes to standard treatment regimes.

The TAC last met in November 2008, and the members are:

- *Mr Bill Robertson*, Board representative;
- *Ms Asha Mahasuria*, a therapeutically qualified optometrist;
- *Dr Tim Henderson*, ophthalmology;
- *Mr Andrew Crowhurst*, pharmacist; and
- *Dr Tony Brownjohn*, general practitioner.

Please contact the Optometrist Board for further information regarding Ocular Therapeutics or look on the Board's webpage.

Information for optometrists on becoming a PBS prescriber is available on the Medicare Australia website at:

www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

The medications listed in the Medicare section are for prescribing by authorised optometrists only.

The following information is from the Department of Health and Ageing, Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule website –
www.pbs.gov.au

The following extract is from the publication:

<http://www.pbs.gov.au/publications/2009/2009-03-01-general-schedule.pdf> and go to Page 528.

Optometrist PBS prescriptions are identifiable by colour, and include the words 'PBS/RPBS optometrist'. Prescriptions must include the optometrist's PBS prescriber number. The same optometrist prescription form is used to prescribe unrestricted, restricted or authority items. Only one item is allowed per form. Optometrist PBS prescriptions may include repeats.

Regulation 24 does not apply for optometrist prescribing. An optometrist cannot direct that original and repeat supplies of pharmaceutical benefits be supplied at the one time.

Authority prescriptions: Authority prescriptions for authority required items, or for increased quantities or repeats, require prior approval from Medicare Australia or the DVA for each prescription. (Refer to details in the Explanatory Notes section under Prescribing Medicines — Information for PBS prescribers and Supplying Medicines — What Pharmacists Need to Know, for more information on authority prescriptions.) DVA approval for non-Schedule items is not available for optometrist prescribing.

RPBS: Optometrists approved as PBS prescribers may write prescriptions for supply under the RPBS. The list of optometrist medicines under the RPBS is the same as the PBS. There are no optometrist listings in the Repatriation Schedule for prescribing for veterans only. There is no provision for optometrist prescribers to request approval to prescribe items that are not included in the PBS optometrist list (non-Schedule items).

State and Territory requirements: Optometrists may prescribe medications as private prescriptions according to their State/Territory prescribing accreditation. The medicines which can be prescribed differ between States and Territories. It is the optometrist's responsibility to ensure adherence to State/Territory law for all prescriptions (PBS and private) and additionally to all PBS requirements for PBS/RPBS prescriptions.

KNOW YOUR ACT

Optometrists and nine (9) other health profession groups are regulated under the *Health Practitioners Act* (the Act) in the Northern Territory. The purpose of the Act is to ensure public protection.

Annual Practising Certificates (APC)

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Section 40 (2) of the *Health Practitioners Act*

A practising certificate is evidence that until the due date, or the date determined by the Board the health practitioner is authorised to practice in the Territory.

**Practising Certificates expire on 30
September each year.**

Always keep your Annual Practising Certificate (APC) in a secure place and check it for the following:

- date on which your APC expires;
- accuracy of information on your APC; and
- conditions (if applicable) listed on the APC.

Please contact the Board immediately if the details on your APC are incorrect.

Those practitioners with conditional registration must ensure they are compliant with the conditions, to do otherwise is a breach of the legislation and may lead to a review of registration pursuant to Section 30 of the *Health Practitioners Act*.

Practising Unlicensed

Practising unlicensed is a breach of **Section 101 (1)(b) of the *Health Practitioners Act*** and is: a risk to patients and practitioners; may impact on entitlement to Medicare rebates; and may alter indemnification arrangements.

Should you find yourself in this situation, it is in the best interest of your patients, yourself and your employer to rectify the situation immediately.

Please note it is the practitioner's responsibility to ensure that he/she holds current registration. The *Health Practitioners Act* does not have the capacity to provide registration retrospectively.

Notice of change of name or address

Section 46 of the *Health Practitioners Act*

A health practitioner must, within 30 days of changing his or her name, personal address or business address, give the relevant Board notice in writing of the change and the new name or address, as the case may be.

Failing to update the Board with changes of name / address details means that you will not receive any correspondence from the Board. In effect this means you will miss the opportunity:

- keep up with changes to policy;
- receive newsletters; and
- receive the application to renew your registration.

The Board seeks your assistance in ensuring that the name and contact details maintained on the database are current.

Unconscionable conduct

Section 111 of the *Health Practitioners Act*

A person must not, either directly or indirectly, attempt to influence, coerce or otherwise cause a health practitioner to conduct or provide a health service that does not comply with the standards contained in the code applying to the Optometrists.

Employer Notice of Misconduct or Incompetence

Section 117 of the *Health Practitioners Act*

If a person who employs a health practitioner terminates or suspends the practitioner's employment because of alleged or actual misconduct or incompetence to practise, the person must provide a written report of the circumstances of the termination or suspension to the Board and to the practitioner.

Protection from Liability

Section 118 of the *Health Practitioners Act*

This section applies to a person who; makes a complaint; provides the Board with information; assists the Board with a preliminary investigation (including an assessment report or opinion); assists or provides information under Part 6; or assists or provides information to the Tribunal. This person is not civilly or criminally liable for an act done by the person in good faith in taking an action referred to above.

CONDUCT

Performance or Competence Assessment

There were no investigations of possible unsatisfactory professional performance and no assessments of competence conducted in this period.

REGISTRATION STATISTICS

As at 1st March 2009 there were a total of 55 Optometrists with current registration in the Northern Territory.

Contact Details

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