

## POLICY STATEMENT REGARDING ONLINE REFRACTIONS

The Ohio State Board of Optometry's first and foremost charge is protection of the public's health and wellness. The Board recognizes that online refractive technology has potential as a visual screening and refractive device in a medical setting or as an online visual screening program. However, the Board does not support the use of online questionnaires to give a glasses or contact lens prescription, without an immediate, accompanying physical examination of ocular health by an Ohio licensed optometrist.

One company is currently on the internet advising they are launching these services. Their policy states; "No one under 18, over 40, or with specific medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, known eye diseases, will qualify to receive a prescription." However, **the use of online questionnaires is inadequate to establish the patient's age and medical/ocular history.** The patient record established by the online eye questionnaire should be consistent with existing laws and regulations governing patient health care records. Age and location of the patient must be verified by acceptable means of identification. Records of past care, with laboratory and test results, are necessary to establish pre-existing medical conditions. We would expect that medical history be verified with a dated copy of a completed physical examination and ocular history be verified with a dated copy of a completed eye examination.

The risk with all telemedicine is substandard professional services. With the promise to save people the commute, the wait, the time, and the money, **standards of care can be significantly compromised.** It is expected that all optometrists who provide telemedicine place the welfare and health of the patients first. An online eye refraction shall not be given after an online questionnaire, unless a dated copy of a recent eye health examination (within 6 months) is part of the patient's record.

Telemedicine is the way of the future and the Board agrees that it is a powerful tool in medical practice, but not a separate form of medicine. We would expect that optometrists who provide eye care, whether in-person or via telemedicine, comply with **acceptable, appropriate, and professional standards of care.** While we support technology, increased access to care, and patient choice, we do not support the use of online questionnaire to give prescriptions without an accompanying, ocular health exam. This does not adhere to current standards of care and therefore represents a compromise to the health and safety of the public.

1. Glasses prescriptions: It is the well-established and accepted standard of care, that a refraction is not to be independent from an ocular health exam. This is vital for the detection of eye diseases that result in permanent vision loss as well as serious systemic diseases. Many times those diseases first present themselves in a change in the quality of vision. Therefore, **we do not support the use of any company to give a prescription apart from the ocular health exam.**

2. Contact lens prescriptions: Under the Fairness to Contact Lens Consumers Act, the expiration date of a contact lens prescription must be specified based on the medical judgment of the prescriber, **with respect to the ocular health of the patient.** This important component of the prescription can be determined only with the use of a slit lamp. Skype interactions, a self-photo, and a web cam photo are not a substitute for this binocular microscope examination, which gives a stereoscopic, highly magnified view of ocular structures. Only a slit lamp examination can detect the presence of corneal neovascularization and infiltrates below the corneal epithelium; both indicate that ocular health is compromised by the use of contact lenses. Additional testing, such as corneal topography, may be necessary to determine whether contact lens wear is causing corneal pathology. Neither a prior contact lens prescription nor a close-up photo of the patient's eyes can confirm ocular health for established contact lens wearers.

Telemedicine is the way of the future and we support technology as a powerful tool in health care. However, The Ohio State Board of Optometry agrees that there are too many unanswered questions regarding this technology, as well as serious concerns for liability and risk involved. **Therefore, we do not advocate participation by Ohio licensed optometrists in these practices. You should notify the Board if you become aware of online refractions being conducted in the State of Ohio.**

## **POLICY STATEMENT REGARDING ONLINE REFRACTIONS**

Please refer to the following excerpts from our Laws, Rules and Policies:

### **4725.19 Disciplinary actions.**

(9) Departing from or failing to conform to acceptable and prevailing standards of care in the practice of optometry as followed by similar practitioners under the same or similar circumstances, regardless of whether actual injury to a patient is established;

(15) Soliciting patients from door to door or establishing temporary offices, in which case the board shall suspend all certificates held by the optometrist;

### **4725.01 Optometry definitions.**

As used in this chapter:

(A)(1) The "practice of optometry" means the application of optical principles, through technical methods and devices, in the examination of human eyes for the purpose of ascertaining departures from the normal, measuring their functional powers, adapting optical accessories for the aid thereof, and detecting ocular abnormalities that may be evidence of disease, pathology, or injury.

### **4725-5-16 Display of name and office requirements.**

An optometrist has the responsibility to establish and maintain a safe and hygienic office adequately equipped to provide full optometric services within the scope of the licensure of the practitioner. The board requires the following minimum equipment needed to provide a full scope examination which shall include, but not be limited to, tonometer, slit lamp, and instrumentation to examine the retina and to perform visual fields. All optometric examination locations shall be equipped with adequate hand washing facilities on location for use by optometrists and patients.