



# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

It is important that every dispensing optician understands their legal responsibilities as a registered health practitioner under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act).

ODOB has set out a definition of the dispensing optician scope of practice which outlines the scope (duties and tasks) of a registered dispensing optician practising under this definition and title. It is important to be familiar with this definition as it can be misunderstood.

## **Dispensing optician scope of practice**

A dispensing optician registered in the Dispensing optician scope of practice holds a qualification prescribed by the ODOB, is involved in the practice of interpreting and dispensing optical prescriptions, and may perform specified delegated tasks set by the ODOB, which are clinical support services for Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) registered optometrists or ophthalmologists who provide direct patient care.

A registered dispensing optician in NZ:

- Is qualified to give advice and instruction in the dispensing of spectacle lenses, spectacle frames (including their fitting), contact lenses, and any other optical device intended for correction of a defect of sight.

- May perform the following delegated tasks in support of NZ registered optometrists or ophthalmologists who provide direct patient care:
  - The operation of diagnostic equipment, including but not limited to, an automated visual field analyser, an auto-refractor, a non-contact tonometer, digital imaging devices, colour vision tests, and standardised visual perceptual tests.
  - The administration of pre-test questionnaires and obtaining of health information.
  - The instruction of treatment plans.
  - The administration of medicines under a Standing Order.
- “Delegated tasks” means activities that are delegated to a dispensing optician by an optometrist or ophthalmologist, and which are done under the supervision of the optometrist or ophthalmologist (not necessarily direct supervision). The responsibility for ensuring the dispensing optician has the knowledge and training to perform the delegated task lies with the delegating health practitioner (optometrist or ophthalmologist), as does any interpretation, diagnosis, treatment outcomes and subsequent management of the patient.

## **Practising safely within the dispensing optician scope of practice**

Section 7 of the HPCA Act does not allow any person to claim to be a health practitioner. This means it is illegal to use names, words, titles, initials, abbreviations, or descriptions stating or implying that a person is a health practitioner of a particular kind (e.g., a ‘Dispensing optician’, or ‘Optical dispenser’).

If the person is not registered a health practitioner, they are not allowed to use the applicable title.

In line with our responsibilities under the HPCA Act, the ODOB has defined the scope of practice of dispensing opticians, and set the relevant qualifications and competence measures for anyone who is registered with us.

The distinction to be made here is whether you are registered or not.

## **Not registered**

If you choose not to get registered with the ODOB as a dispensing optician, you cannot call yourself, or hold yourself out to be a 'Dispensing optician' or 'Optical dispenser' in any way.

Without registration with the ODOB and a practising certificate, a person cannot practise, or state or do anything that may be calculated to suggest that they practise, or are willing to practise, using the aforementioned titles. To do so would be an offence under the HPCA Act and would risk prosecution by the Ministry of Health.

## **Registered**

If you are registered with the ODOB, you can call yourself a 'Dispensing optician' or 'Optical dispenser' and must follow the standards and regulations set by the ODOB for your profession. Once you are registered, you must also always have a valid practising certificate in order to practise.

You may retain your registration with the ODOB but for various reasons may not be actively practising at any given time. For example, you may be on parental leave, sick leave, or take a prolonged trip overseas, etc. and don't need a practising certificate. However, before you return to practise in NZ, you must have a valid practising certificate.

Registering with the ODOB and practising, performing tasks that fall within the defined scope of practice set by the ODOB, using an alternative

title and without a practising certificate are also not allowed.

If a practitioner wishes to perform the tasks associated with optical dispensing under an alternative title, they must first deregister (remove their name from the different register) with the ODOB.

By breaching any of the abovementioned ways or practising without holding a valid practising certificate, can be considered a professional conduct matter and may result in disciplinary action. This can include the process of investigation by a Professional Conduct Committee and even sanctions under the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal. According to the HPCA Act, you may not deregister until these processes are complete.

Retaining registration with the ODOB makes you answerable to our standards and guidelines. It is therefore crucial that dispensing opticians understand what it means to be registered and how to ensure they practise legally under the law.

**For more information, please contact the ODOB office:**

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