

## **General Optical Council Press Release – 28 August 2007**

For immediate release

### **GOC welcomes new prescribing rights for optometrists**

The General Optical Council (GOC) welcomed today's announcement from the Department of Health that optometrists will be able to train to prescribe medicines independently.

Roger Buckley, chairman of the GOC's standards committee said: "This move has the potential to transform the public's perception of optometrists, as well as the ways in which the country's eye care services are delivered. Optometrists are highly qualified clinicians but they remain a largely untapped resource in health care, with the capacity to provide high quality, convenient services for patients with a wide range of common and long term eye conditions.

"GPs are likely to welcome the option of referring patients to a local prescribing optometrist, particularly where access to a hospital ophthalmology department is difficult or where there is a long waiting time for non-urgent appointments."

Optometrists who wish to become independent prescribers will need to complete further GOC-approved training and enter their specialty in the General Optical Council's register. Once trained they will have to keep their skills up to date. Optometrists are subject to regulatory controls in the same way as doctors, and will not prescribe outside their area of competence.

As clinical professionals, all optometrists are trained to recognise eye diseases and are currently able to use therapeutic drugs to manage common, non-sight-threatening eye conditions, such as conjunctivitis, blepharitis, minor trauma and dry eye.

Optometrists may also currently train and register in two therapeutic prescribing specialties. Optometrists registered as Additional Supply specialists are qualified to write orders for, and supply in an emergency, a range of drugs in addition to those which can be ordered or supplied by a normal optometrist. Registrants with the Supplementary Prescribing specialty are qualified to manage a patient's clinical condition and prescribe medicines according to a clinical management plan set up in conjunction with an independent prescriber, such as a GP or ophthalmologist.

ENDS



**Notes for editors:**

1. Roger Buckley is available for interview.
2. Alternative and high resolution photographs are available on request.
3. There are currently 11,291 optometrists registered with the General Optical Council.

**About the General Optical Council**

The GOC is the regulator for the optical professions in the UK. Its purpose is to protect the public by promoting high standards of education and conduct amongst opticians. The Council currently registers around 22,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians and optical businesses.

For further information, photographs, or to arrange an interview please contact:

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