Fee Guidelines for Providing Patient Information Including Prescriptions for Ophthalmic Appliances

Patients commonly ask optometrists for information related to their eyeglasses or contact lenses including their prescription and other appliance-specific details. Optometrists are required to release information from the patient record under the following circumstances and conditions:

- To provide to a patient a written, signed and dated prescription for a subnormal vision device, contact lens or eyeglasses at the time of the completion of the examination unless the optometrist has reasonable cause to withhold the information.
- To issue an initial prescription as part of the assessment without additional charge when a clinically significant refractive error is diagnosed
- To provide within a reasonable time, any report or certificate requested by the patient or the patient's representative (someone with consent of the patient to access patient information) in respect of an examination or treatment provided by the optometrist, unless reasonable cause has been established to withhold the information.
- To provide an explanation to the patient of the reason for a clinically justifiable expiry date on a prescription
- To provide any information from the clinical records to the patient or the patient's representative upon request.
- To provide patient information through implied consent to other regulated health professionals, including opticians.
- Not to provide patient information to anyone other than a regulated health professional or in compliance with *The Personal Health Information Privacy Act (2004),* (PHIPA) without the expressed consent of either the patient or the patient's representative

Notwithstanding the above requirements to release patient information, optometrists can require the following conditions from the patient prior to release of the information:

- Optometrists may withhold patient information pending payment of any fee.
- A fee may be charged for additional copies of a prescription or for the retrieval, copying and re-filing of information from the records, including contact lens specifications. (see OAO fee guide for suggested fees)



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Spectacle Prescription

When either asked for or offering a copy of a spectacle prescription, optometrists should include findings that are available based upon the services provided. Appliance-specific details including inter-pupillary distance, optical centre position and bifocal location are measurements related to appliance design and are not considered part of the prescription.

Any appliance-specific details resulting from spectacle therapy and contained in the patient record must be provided to the patient upon request. A fee can be charged for the retrieval, copying and re-filing of the information. Obsolete clinical refractive findings do not constitute a prescription but should be provided to a patient upon request as patient information only.

Contact Lens Prescription

When asked for a copy of the contact lens prescription, the optometrist cannot provide contact lens specifications unless contact lens therapy has been successfully completed. In the absence of contact lens specifications, the optometrist can only provide a spectacle prescription.

Following successful contact lens therapy, a patient may choose to purchase the contact lenses elsewhere. If so requested, the optometrist should provide the specifications of the contact lenses upon payment of the appropriate contact lens therapy service fee.

An optometrist may assess a new patient who presents wearing contact lenses of known specifications. If the contact lenses are determined to be appropriate, and when requested, the optometrist should provide a copy of the new contact lens prescription to the patient upon payment of the contact lens assessment fee.

Any contact lens specifications resulting from successful contact lens therapy and contained in the patient record must be provided to the patient upon request. A fee can be charged for the retrieval, copying and re-filing of the information.

Patient information may be provided to other regulated health professionals, including opticians through implied consent. Patient information should not be disclosed to non-regulated eye care providers. Any request for personal health information from non-regulated eye care providers should be provided directly to the patient and only upon the request and consent of either the patient or the patient's representative

To avoid unnecessary patient complaints, optometrists should ensure that patients clearly understand their fee responsibilities prior to providing any service.