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AMENDMENTS TO THE OPTOMETRIC PRACTICE AND LICENSURE ACT

As you may know, Governor Schweiker signed SB831, thereby enacting Act 225 of 2002 on December 16, 2002. Act 225 significantly amends the Optometric Practice and Licensure Act. The State Board of Optometry (Board) is pleased to provide its licensees with this summary of the amendments to the Act and to invite optometrists certified at the therapeutics level to apply for certification to treat glaucoma. Please refer to the Board's website, www.dos.state.pa.us for additional information. The Secretary of Health has now approved the use of additional pharmaceutical agents by appropriately-certified optometrists.

Summary of Major Changes to the Act

Act 225 removes the former restriction that prohibited optometrists from using beta blockers and steroids. Therefore, subject to the approval by the Secretary of Health of beta blockers and steroids, those optometrists certified to administer and prescribe pharmaceutical agents for therapeutic purposes will be able to utilize these medications. The Board anticipates that the Secretary of Health will approve specific steroids by early April 2003.

Act 225 replaces the former restriction that prohibited optometrists from treating glaucoma with a provision that allows optometrists who have been certified by the Board to treat glaucoma to treat primary open angle glaucoma, exfoliation glaucoma and pigmentary glaucoma. Act 225 sets forth the qualifications for optometrists who wish to become certified by the Board to treat glaucoma.

In order to become certified to treat glaucoma, an optometrist must already be certified by the Board to administer and prescribe pharmaceutical agents for therapeutic purposes. An optometrist who does not currently hold therapeutic certification must obtain therapeutic certification before completing the additional requirements to obtain certification to treat glaucoma.

Act 225 sets forth the requirements to become certified to treat glaucoma based on how an individual optometrist qualified for therapeutic certification. Under the 1996 amendments to the Act, optometrists obtained certification in one of two ways:

Category One**Category Two**

Optometrists who obtained therapeutic certification under section 4.1(a)(1) of the Act by demonstrating that they had successfully completed 100 hours of education in pharmaceuticals that was required as a condition of graduation from their optometry school and demonstrating that they passed the NBEO examination which included testing on pharmaceuticals.	Optometrists who obtained therapeutic certification under section 4.1(a)(2) of the Act by successfully completing a stand-alone, Board-approved course of at least 100 hours in pharmaceuticals and by passing the TMOD examination.
	
These optometrists need only complete the enclosed application for certification to treat glaucoma, verify their compliance with new liability insurance minimums (\$1,000,000 per occurrence, \$3,000,000 annual aggregate), and agree to pay a fee that will be determined at a later date (approximately \$25.00) in order to obtain certification to treat glaucoma.	These optometrists need to obtain 18 hours of Board-approved continuing education in glaucoma and submit the certificates of attendance from the course(s) taken, complete the enclosed application for certification to treat glaucoma, verify their compliance with new liability insurance minimums (\$1,000,000 per occurrence, \$3,000,000 annual aggregate), and agree to pay a fee that will be determined at a later date (approximately \$25.00) in order to obtain certification to treat glaucoma.

As a general rule, candidates who passed the NBEO examination on or after April 1, 1993, were likely certified under category one. This is because the NBEO first included testing on pharmaceuticals on that date.

Obtaining the 18 hours of continuing education in glaucoma

Act 225 requires therapeutically certified optometrists who obtained their certification under Category Two to complete 18 hours of Board-approved continuing education in glaucoma since December 16, 2002. Optometrists may meet this requirement by taking 18 hours from: (A) a pre-approved provider, such as an accredited college of optometry; (B) a course (or courses) with a Pennsylvania Board approval number; or (C) a course (or courses) with a COPE approval number.

Optometrists are required to complete at least 30 hours of Board-approved continuing education in each biennial period. For optometrists certified at the

therapeutics level, at least 6 of the 30 hours must be taken in courses related to pharmaceuticals. For optometrists certified to treat glaucoma, at least 4 hours of the 30 hours must be taken in courses related to the treatment of glaucoma. These 4 glaucoma hours may also be used toward the 6 hour requirement in general pharmaceuticals, so long as a total of 30 hours is completed biennially.

Licensed for diagnostics only	Licensed for therapeutics only	Licensed for therapeutics and glaucoma
Must take 30 hours of Board-approved continuing education, no restrictions on content	Must take 30 hours of Board-approved continuing education At least 6 hours must be in therapeutics	Must take 30 hours of Board-approved continuing education At least 4 hours must be in glaucoma At least <u>an additional 2 hours</u> in therapeutics

Using the 18 hours taken in glaucoma toward the 30 hours of continuing education required biennially

The 18-hours of continuing education in glaucoma are not an addition to the 30 hours required biennially. Thus, when an optometrist meets the 18-hour requirement for obtaining glaucoma certification, that optometrist has also tallied 18 hours toward the biennial requirement for the biennial period in which the 18 hours were completed.

Glaucoma Certification will change your license number

All optometrists who are granted certification to treat glaucoma will receive a new license number. These optometrists will also receive new licensure documents that reflect the new license number. Any pre-printed prescription pads that contain your license number will have to be reordered with your new license number.

Additional information

Please check the Board’s website for additional information. We will compile a list of frequently asked questions as we go through the process of certifying optometrists to treat glaucoma. If your question is not answered by this mailing or other information on the website, please email your inquiry to st-optometry@state.pa.us or call 717-783-7155.