



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Cosmetic contact lens legislation sees the light of day!

Cosmetic contact lenses have a risk of harm and should be classified the same as corrective contacts.

Ottawa, October 5, 2011 – It is appropriate as we approach Halloween, that legislation (Bill C-313) has been introduced in the House of Commons by MP Pat Davidson (Sarnia-Lambton) to amend the Food and Drug Act to classify cosmetic contact lenses as class II medical devices, the same as corrective lenses are now classified.

Halloween is peak season for the use of cosmetic contact lenses and there is an abundance of evidence that exists to highlight the potential dangers of using them without professional oversight. This includes Health Canada's own report entitled "Human Health Risk Assessment of Cosmetic Contact Lens" which was completed in September 2003. This risk assessment concluded that there is no difference between how cosmetic contact lenses and corrective contact lenses are inserted and interact with the eye and should be regulated the same.

The Canadian Associations of Optometrists, Opticians and Ophthalmologists are very pleased that Ms. Davidson has once again put forward a motion to classify cosmetic contact lenses as medical devices.

"This is about people's eyesight...and in most cases young people's eyesight! There are daily news stories from around the world about the complications that can arise due to ill-fitting cosmetic lenses or improper use and handling." Dr. Lillian Linton, President of the Canadian Association of Optometrists stated. "It is an important vision health issue and the optometrists, opticians and ophthalmologists of Canada are asking for unanimous support from the House, Senate and Health Canada to adopt this amendment and enact it with haste."

Prescribing and dispensing of corrective contact lenses are regulated in all provinces. These regulations exist due to the risk of vision loss that contact lens users potentially face if lenses improperly fit on the eye or if use and care instructions are not followed. Currently cosmetic contact lenses can be sold out of novelty shops, drug stores, kiosks, the internet and similar unregulated sellers, where critical information on how to use and care for the devices is not provided. The majority of complications arise from improper use and handling.

Classifying cosmetic contact lenses as medical devices will require the products sold in Canada to be licensed through Health Canada and distributors of the products will require a medical device establishment license. This legislation is only the start of controlling the distribution of these items. Prescription and dispensing regulations are provincially controlled and once this legislation is passed federally, we hope it will provide the impetus for provinces to act to change their regulations to treat cosmetic contact lenses the same as corrective lenses.

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