



Online Eye Exams

The Policy Issue

The Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) is concerned about the safety of online 'eye exams' being made available to the public. Consumers need to be aware that the determination of a person's refractive error (the lens power required to correct faulty vision) without the eyes being physically examined by a Doctor of Optometry or an Ophthalmologist (medical eye doctor) is NOT an eye exam. Anyone claiming to have performed an eye exam without physically examining the person and doing an eye health assessment is misleading him or her that their eye health needs have been met.

Policy Position

Optometrists and Ophthalmologists are able to interpret changes in refractive error and the physical condition of the eye and determine their possible implications for the state of eye and general health. Consumers who use on-line 'eye exams' place themselves at significant risk of missed detection and treatment of eye diseases that can cause irreversible vision loss and the detection of other diseases that may cause serious illness and premature loss of life.

Those who market online eye testing should be thoroughly scrutinized and, where possible, prevented from steering people away from having comprehensive eye health exams needed to diagnose serious eye disease in a timely fashion, often before noticeable symptoms appear. Doctors of Optometry routinely diagnose and manage diabetic and hypertensive eye disease, glaucoma, macular degeneration, cataracts, and many other conditions. Often, delay in intervention will result in progressive damage to vision, and more costly and intensive treatments later in life.

To help safeguard consumers, the CAO will continue to monitor Internet-based promotion of "eye exams without doctors," working with other health organizations and government departments to increase awareness about these false claims and about the importance of regular professional eye health assessment and care.

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