

NSCO Policy on Teleoptometry: March 30, 2020

(replaces March 25, 2020 Bulletin)

Preamble and Definition:

The profession of optometry in Nova Scotia is defined primarily by its scope of practice. In the current climate of COVID-19, the traditional model of providing optometric care with its direct provider-to-patient relationship is compromised. Using technology for more indirect and remote ways of providing consultative, diagnostic and treatment services has become necessary.

Teleoptometry is the provision of vision and eye health services that are delivered within the scope of practice of optometry using electronic health information, optometric and communication technologies, and where the provider and patient are separated by remote distance.

The NSCO advises Optometrists in Nova Scotia to comply with the following points if engaging in the practice of teleoptometry:

- 1) The use of teleoptometry to provide optometric care is at the member's discretion. Members must use their professional judgment to determine whether patient consultation via teleoptometry is appropriate in a particular case.
- 2) It is recommended that optometrists have an established practitioner-patient relationship. Recognizing the limits of teleoptometry, optometrists must strive to provide care consistent with acceptable standards of practice. Patients must be made aware of these limitations before engaging in teleoptometry with their optometrist.
- 3) Optometrists must be registered in Nova Scotia and maintain appropriate professional liability insurance. Members are responsible for verifying they have liability insurance in place to cover the practice of teleoptometry for both existing as well as new patients.
- 4) Verbal communication with the patient by phone, or internet-based audio/video communications is acceptable.

- 5) Optometrists must adhere to all ethical and legal requirements to obtain valid informed consent and to protect the privacy and confidentiality of patient information.
- 6) Optometrists must maintain proper clinical records for all patients to whom care is delivered through the practice of teleoptometry.
- 7) Optometrists must comply with relevant legislation and regulatory policies in all aspects of their practice including current and evolving technologies used in teleoptometry.