

# **Ethics**



## NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS

### CODE OF ETHICS

#### **Introduction**

A Code of Ethics is a guide to the professional conduct that may reasonably be expected of members of a profession.

The principal concern of a profession is the welfare of the public and many of the ethics emphasise this.

The NZAO has no statutory penal powers but in common with all incorporated bodies it can discipline its members. This process relies less upon penal measures than upon the loss of esteem among colleagues which necessarily accompanies the upholding of a just complaint.

To lay a complaint under these ethics is obviously a serious matter. If a breach of ethics appears to have occurred whether through ignorance or by intention, a personal approach should be made to the member concerned to seek their cooperation.

If this fails there is an obligation on behalf of other members to lay a formal complaint, in writing, with the National Director of the NZAO. A complaint may be laid by a member of the Association, a member of the public, or some other body.

#### **Purpose**

This Code of Ethics contains the standards which

- ❖ Reflect the integrity of our profession
- ❖ Reinforce the principles on which we make ethical decisions
- ❖ Assist members of our Association adopt legitimate and professionally acceptable behaviour in their practices
- ❖ People outside our profession may use to evaluate us

#### **Other Obligations**

As well as observing this Code of Ethics, each member of the Association must also comply with all relevant laws and regulations which govern the practice of optometry in the New Zealand. These ethics should be read in conjunction with these laws, the NZAO Rules and Code of Patient Rights.

## Responsibilities to the patient

### Optometrists shall

1. Always respect their patient's rights, dignity, autonomy and access to continuity of care.
2. Avoid all forms of discrimination; treating all patients, staff and kindred professionals with fairness, honesty, courtesy, respect and understanding.
3. Understand the concept of duty of care.
4. Disclose any significant proprietary interest they have in the care options recommended and not permit pecuniary gain to affect their clinical judgement.
5. Endeavour to understand each patient's cultural perspective and level of background knowledge, in order to ensure effective communication.
6. Respect the confidentiality of the information received in the course of the professional consultation, only disclosing information where the patient consents or the law requires

## Professional responsibilities

### Optometrists shall

7. Promote and maintain collegial, respectful and unselfish relationships with members of their own and other health professions
8. Practise with conscience and integrity in a manner that is in the best interest of the informed patient, enhancing the status of the profession and promoting public confidence.
9. Ensure that their practice modalities, delegations, resources and the accurate and legible recording of clinical findings, diagnosis and management reflect the current standard of care.
10. Promote and advance high standards of contemporary professional competence and knowledge, ensuring the delivery of accurate diagnoses, advice and treatment.
11. Ensure that referrals and reports to and from colleagues and other health professionals are actioned in a manner appropriate to the patient's best interests.
12. Individually and collectively, strive to advance and disseminate the knowledge and learning of the profession for the benefit of the wider community.

## Optometry and business practice

### Optometrists shall

13. Not enter, remain in or negotiate a practising scenario where commercial imperatives including the offering of incentives have the potential to conflict with the free exercise of clinical judgment and the upholding of an uncompromised standard of care.
14. Ensure that any arrangement to reward effort or performance does not have the potential to bias a practitioner's clinical judgment toward decisions that may not be in the patients best interests
15. Seek the advice of a suitable colleague or organisation if they find themselves in a position or an environment of providing compromised patient care.
16. When promoting their practice or profession, ensure any claims made are valid, truthful and reflect their status as a trusted registered health practitioner

