Dear Mr Choonara

Highlights in this issue:

- Substandard and unprofessional services by mobile practices
- Is the sharing of rooms illegal?
- Illegal sale of contact lenses
- Online sale of spectacles
- How to deal with scope infringements

CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOME NOTE

It is with great pleasure I welcome you to the first newsletter of the new Professional Board. This edition is packed with information I believe will assist and guide you in your daily functions as eye care professionals.

Firstly, I would like to extend a word of gratitude to the previous Board members for their dedication and contribution to the development of the profession.

NEW PROFESSIONAL BOARD INAUGURATED

The new Professional Board for Optometry and Dispensing Opticians was inaugurated during July 2010. Vanessa Moodley was elected Chairperson and Motebang Mosala as Vice Chairperson.

Members of the Board include academics from educational institutions, experts in various fields of the professions, as well as representatives from the Department of Health and the community.

DIAGNOSTIC PRIVILEGES

Practitioners who have diagnostic privileges have successfully completed a Board approved course in Ocular Diseases, which grants them permission to purchase, store and utilise diagnostic drugs according to the list approved by the Board.
MINIMUM EQUIPMENT AND STANDARDS AUDIT

The Board would like to remind practitioners that practices must have the appropriate equipment to meet clinical standards when examining patients, including conducting a basic visual examination, examination of children, low vision and contact lenses patients.

Minimum equipment lists have been compiled by the Board and the minimum clinical standards for the different aspects of Optometric and Dispensing Opticianry practice have been defined.

LEGAL ISSUES: NAMING AND SHAMING

Although the profession sees very few unprofessional conduct cases relating to clinical issues, there has been an alarming increase in fraudulent matters reported to the Board. Many more fraud cases have been reported to the HPCSA from medical aid schemes. The Preliminary Committee of Inquiry adopted a zero-tolerance approach on any fraud cases.

The Board is also concerned about the substandard and unprofessional services offered by mobile practices (see media release underneath).

The following practitioners were found guilty and the following sentences were imposed for 2011.

"We would like to urge our professionals to partake in CPD activities where ethics forms a key part of the activity," Chairperson Vanessa Moodley said.

IS THE SHARING OF ROOMS ILLEGAL?

While it may be economically viable to share rooms with other practitioners, there are certain rules that have to be adhered to.

Rule 8A of the Ethical Rules of Conduct for Practitioners in the heading "Sharing of Rooms" stipulates that a practitioner shall not share his or her rooms with a person or entity not registered in terms of the Health Professions Act.

A registered Optometrist may share rooms any practitioner who is registered in terms of the Act. However, a registered Optometrist may not share rooms with an Attorney or any other professional who is not registered in terms of the Act.

The Act further stipulates that a practitioner may employ a professional assistant or locum tenes for no longer than six months.

Only a person:

- Who is registered with the HPCSA in the category Independent Practice
- Whose name currently appears on the Register
- Who is not suspended from practising his or her profession may be employed.

HPCSA ALARMED BY SUBSTANDARD AND UNPROFESSIONAL SERVICES BY MOBILE PRACTICES

Media Release, 26 July 2011

Pretoria - The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) has noted with alarm the numerous complaints received regarding mobile optometric practices offering substandard, unprofessional and unethical services to the public.

"The public has a right to quality healthcare and we as the Council are mandated to protect the public from these unethical and unprofessional practices. “ Ms Vanessa Moodley, Chairperson of the Professional Board for Optometry and Dispensing Opticians said.
ILLEGAL SALE OF CONTACT LENSES

The introduction of contact lenses to the consumer market has created numerous unsafe and illegal practices. One of the common practices that raise concerns amongst the optometric profession in South Africa is the increasing number of contact lenses being bought over the counter from flea markets, trade fairs, clothing stores, beauty shops, and through the internet without going through the proper clinical fitting regimen.

ONLINE SALE OF SPECTACLES

By Dr Paul Ramkissoon

The scope of practice of Optometrists includes the provision of clear and comfortable vision. To ensure clear and comfortable vision, teaching institutions, professional organisations, and regulatory bodies provide stringent guidelines on patient care.

NAMING OF PRACTICES

The HPCSA has ruled that all practitioners registered with the Council must only use their names as practice names. The practitioners registered with the Board have to comply with this amended regulation.

The Board is therefore no longer approving the practice names for Optometrists and practitioners therefore do not require an approval letter from the HPCSA as they will be using their registered name to name the practice.

ACCREDITATION OF UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES

A very important task of the Board is the monitoring of education standards. In carrying out this mandate, the Board conducts regular accreditation evaluations of all universities offering optometry and dispensing optician programmes.

Each institution underwent an evaluation process five years ago and three of the five institutions in the country had received full accreditation while two were granted conditional accreditation.

The Board will now return during 2012 and expects that universities will have improved over the past few years to ensure that minimum education standards are met in all aspects of their education programme.

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL BOARD EXAM

After conducting a pilot examination to test administrative systems, the Board is drafting regulations for the introduction of the National Board Examination as part of the maintenance of quality standards.

The examination is being considered as part of a comprehensive strategy that will see graduates receive their degrees from their respective universities, complete a period of community service and thereafter sit for the National Board Examination, which will have to be successfully completed to obtain a licence for Independent Practice.

HOW TO DEAL WITH SCOPE INFRINGEMENTS

The Board would like to highlight the fact that practitioners must not allow non-registered members of their staff to engage in any activity, which falls within the scope of practice of registered professions.
This includes front liners/receptionists/technicians etc. It is important that individuals who are conducting vision therapy, optical dispensing or other scope infringements are reported to the police.

If these activities are being conducted with the permission/instruction or knowledge of the practitioner, then a complaint against the practitioner must be lodged with the HPCSA for further investigation.

OCULAR DIAGNOSTICS, THERAPEUTICS AND OTHER COURSES OFFERED

As the HPCSA has approved the ocular therapeutics course proposed by the board, many optometrists without the Ocular Diagnostics have approached universities in an attempt to do the course.

The Ocular Diagnostic Course is a pre-requisite for the Therapeutics course and will increase the number of Optometrists with Diagnostic and Therapeutic privileges.

INAPPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS REMAINS A CONCERN

Although South African practitioners rank amongst the best in the world, the Board is concerned about the increase in the number of inappropriate relationship complaints which has been lodged with the Council.

In 2009/2010 28 cases of sexual misconduct were lodged. There has been a sharp increase as only two complaints were lodged in 2006/2007 while five complaints were lodged in 2007/2008.

PROVIDING INFORMATION WITHIN PRACTICES

After receiving some complaints from the public that practitioners are not clearly identified at multiple practices, the Board would like to remind practitioners that the following information must be clearly displayed within your practice:

- Name
- Qualification
- HPCSA registration number

Details of Locums working at a specific practice must also be visible to the public and the prescription pad should also reflect the owner of the practice and the substitute practitioner.

Please also ensure there is clear identification of practitioners in practices where there are multiple practitioners.

CPD AND FEEDBACK ON AUDIT

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) plays a crucial role in assisting healthcare practitioners acquire new and updated levels of knowledge, skills and ethical attitudes that will not only add measurable benefits to the professional practice, but also enhance and promote professional integrity to the ultimate benefit of the patient/client.

ETHICS - A KEY COMPONENT TO CPD

Healthcare is a constantly advancing field and with these advances, conflicts often arise within the complex arenas of politics, law, religion, philosophy and economics. Findings by the Council attribute a high number of legal cases against practitioners to the lack of knowledge with regard to their ethical behaviour and conduct.
EMPLOYERS WARNED ABOUT UNREGISTERED HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS

The HPCSA will be taking action against employers of unregistered healthcare practitioners.

“There are legal consequences for both the employer and employee performing professional acts on a patient whilst not registered with the Council,” Dr Kgosi Letlape, then Acting CEO and Registrar said.

“We would like to remind employers of their legal obligation to ensure and monitor the continued HPCSA registration of their healthcare practitioners. Non-compliance constitutes a criminal offence for both the employer and employee and Council is calling on all practitioners and employees to ensure their registration with the Council is renewed annually, as stipulated in the Health Professions Act.”

BENEFITS OF REGISTERING WITH THE HPCSA

Practitioners who practise any of the health professions falling within the ambit of the HPCSA are obliged to register with the Council.

NEW COUNCIL INAUGURATED

The new President and Vice President of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) were elected in February 2011 at the first meeting of the newly constituted Council. Prof Sam Mokgokong was elected as President, while Prof Tholene Sodi, who is the Chairperson of the Professional Board for Psychology was elected as Vice President for a five year term.

URGENT REQUEST TO UPDATE CONTACT DETAILS

As we embrace technology (and sometimes the challenges that go with it) we would like to request practitioners to ensure the Council has their correct contact details.

“In a service orientated industry, the HPCSA is trying to improve communicating more effectively, frequently and efficiently with its members. We are therefore urgently requesting all practitioners to ensure their contact details are correct on the HPCSA database”, Dr Kgosi Letlape, then Acting Registrar and CEO said.

RESTORING YOUR NAME TO THE REGISTER IN THREE EASY STEPS

1. Phone our Client Contact Centre on 012 338 9301 or email us for your restoration fee including penalties if applicable;
2. Complete Form 18.
3. Fax proof of payment and the completed Form 18 to 012 338 5120 - Attention Registrations Department;

ANNUAL FEES REMINDER

A friendly reminder that Annual Fees were due by 1 April 2012.

Annual Fees for the Registers of Optometry and Dispensing Opticians

COMMITTED TO YOU!

HPCSA has firmly pledged its commitment to providing our practitioners with a delightful service delivery experience and we have initiated Service Delivery Charters for all departments.

We would also like to introduce our Client Services Officer, Ms Shainaaz Smile who is dedicated to ensuring our clients receive outstanding service, every time.
If you have experienced any pleasant or disappointing service, we would love to hear from you. Kindly email us your feedback to servicedelivery@hpcsa.co.za

Optisight News is a newsletter for practitioners registered with the Professional Board for Optometry and Dispensing Opticians.

It is produced by the Public Relations and Service Delivery department, HPCSA building, 2nd floor, 553 Vermeulen street, Arcadia, Pretoria.

Practitioners are encouraged to forward their contributions to Sipho Mbele at siphom@hpcsa.co.za

Contact Us

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Client Contact Centre
Tel: 012 338 3901
Fax: 012 328 5120
Email: info@hpcsa.co.za

Certificate of Good Standing
Client Contact Centre
Tel: 012 338 9301
Email: hpcsacgs@hpcsa.co.za

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
Helena da Silva
Tel: 012 338 9413
Email: cpd@hpcsa.co.za

Change of contact details
Email: records@hpcsa.co.za

Ethics and professional practice, undesirable business practice and human rights:
Ntsikelelo Sipeka
Tel: 012 338 3946
Email: ntsikelelos@hpcsa.co.za

Service Delivery
Email: servicedelivery@hpcsa.co.za

Complaints against practitioners
Legal Services
Fax: 012 328 4895
Email: legalmed@hpcsa.co.za

Communication with the Board should be directed to:
P.O. Box 205
Pretoria
0001

Board Manager:
Tebogo Vundule
Tel: 012 338 9448
Email: tebogov@hpcsa.co.za

Secretary:
Modern Ramare
Tel: 012 338 9421
Email: modernr@hpcsa.co.za

Committee Coordinator:
Chuma Senoko
Tel: 012 338 9474
Email: chumal@hpcsa.co.za

unsubscribe