



# FACT SHEET

## OUR GUARANTEE WHEN WE DISPENSE OPTICAL CORRECTION

When we dispense spectacles, it will be after discussing your needs and advising on the best options. A prescription is simply a 'Bunch of Numbers', it is a starting point for an effective dispensing process but says nothing about what you may need, what you value, what you do or, indeed what you worry about with your vision. These numbers do not necessarily reflect specific lifestyle requirements. It is the role of the dispenser to take time to interpret your needs and recommend the most suitable correction for those needs.

Unfortunately the modern marketing 'spin' tends to downgrade quality care and commitment and emphasises 'cost' over 'value'. Understandably most of us wish to save money and we can be easily tempted by 'apparent' savings. This creates a problem in the profession when prescriptions are taken away. If problems arise who takes responsibility?



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# OC advises on managing non-tolerance issues

The problem becomes more political as the eye exam is woefully under-remunerated. Devaluing the Eye Examination is actually unfair to the patient as it degrades clinical standards. The 'profit' then solely lies in selling spectacles. The faster the eye exam the more spectacles you can sell!

When a prescription is dispensed elsewhere it is too easy for less ethical suppliers to simply send you

The guidance effectively says that if a practice accepts a prescription for dispensing, then it accepts any non-tolerance risks that go with it.

back to the original examiner when the fault more likely reflects poor dispensing or poor (cheap) product. New guidance by the Optical Confederation aims to clarify the responsibilities of the group who dispensed the spectacles.

THE OPTICAL Confederation (OC) has updated its guidance on managing non-tolerance issues relating specifically to cases when the sight test and dispense are delivered by different practices.

# The full OT report and our ongoing commitment.

Our policy has always been to solve any non-tolerance problem, whether we conducted the original eye exam or not!

We are proud to guarantee our professional care and professional advice. If it turns out we dispensed inappropriately, we will modify or change the management options.

However, when a prescription is taken elsewhere we can take no such responsibility.

In these situations we are often sorting out someone else's mistakes; often reflecting choice of poor quality or cheap lenses or simply because the dispenser has not spent time interpreting your lifestyle requirements.

Any difficulties you may experience with our spectacles will be dealt with promptly.

If you have a problem with anything we have dispensed we want to know to be able to address any concerns you may have. Because we spend time initially investigating your visual needs we have very few problems. However, if you do have difficulties ask to see your original Dispensing Consultant.

No matter what the reason, our commitment is to endeavour to solve any problems you may have.

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THE OPTICAL Confederation (OC) has updated its guidance on managing non-tolerance issues relating specifically to cases when the sight test and dispense are delivered by different practices.

The guidance, which is available on its website, bit.ly/1tZrnaf, advises that it is the responsibility of the dispensing practice to resolve any non-tolerance issue, which could involve providing a new dispense if necessary.

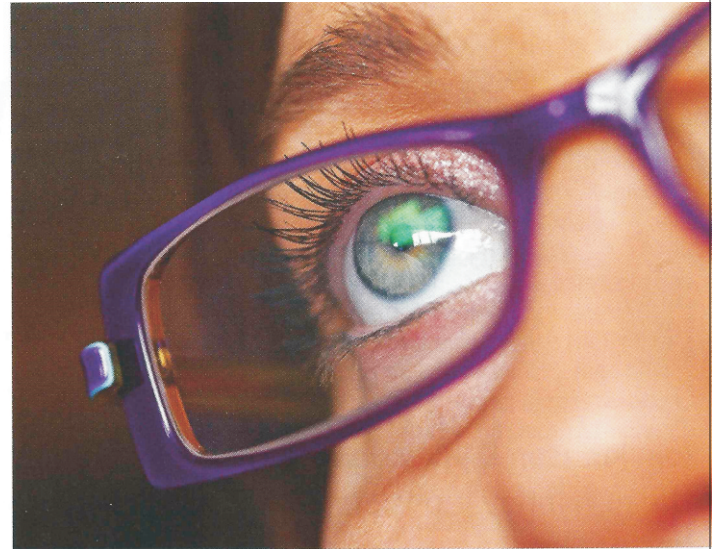
Responding to the advice, optometrist and clinical adviser to the AOP, Trevor Warburton, told *OT*: "Separation of prescribing and dispensing is a major cause of complaint. When it happens, the aggravation for the patient needs to be minimised, and bouncing them back and forth between dispenser and prescriber only serves to increase irritation levels resulting in complaints – to the practice, to the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS) and to the General Optical Council."

#### **GUIDANCE GIVEN**

The guidance document, which was issued by the OC, of which the AOP is a founding member, advises that, regardless of the reason, in a situation where a patient is unhappy with their spectacles or service provided, a practice's priority should be to resolve the situation.

The guidance details that the dispensing practice should always act in the best interests of the patient, adding that with their consent, they could contact the original prescriber to ensure that there is not a clinical reason for non-tolerance.

Highlighting the importance of the guidance, Mr Warburton



**This new advice is intended to ensure that the responsibility for remedying the situation generally lies where the profit is – with the dispensing practice**

explained: "Most practices have patients take prescriptions away, as well as present them from elsewhere, so the effect is largely neutral, but the guidance seeks to minimise the inconvenience for the patient.

The guidance effectively says that if a practice accepts a prescription for dispensing, then it accepts any non-tolerance risks that go with it."

While most non-tolerance issues are resolved without difficulty, some cases will require the dispensing and prescribing practices to agree a course of action. However, the guidance stresses that a new dispense should not be held up during these discussions and if an agreement can not be reached between practices, they should see advice from their representative body.

#### **THE AOP ADVISES**

Director of policy at the AOP, David Craig, told *OT*: "Every

practitioner has experienced the situation in which a patient, who has taken their prescription to a different practice, returns, saying that they do not get on with their new glasses and asks the prescriber to issue a new and "better" prescription, and sometimes even to reimburse them for the cost of the original spectacles."

Mr Craig added: "This new advice is intended to ensure that the responsibility for remedying the situation generally lies where the profit is – with the dispensing practice. This is not intended to replace advice for patients to buy spectacles or contact lenses from the practice which conducted the sight test, which remains the best way to avoid problems."

The new guidance is endorsed by the Optical Consumer Complaints Service. 