

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE BY CASE & SOA

4 January 2008

FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION SEMINAR: 'WHO CARES FOR YOUR EYES?' JOINTLY ORGANISED BY CASE (CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE) & SOA (SINGAPORE OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION)

The Optometrists and Opticians Act was passed in July 2007 in Parliament and has come into force on 1 January, 2008. The purpose of regulation is to ensure that those who provide eye care services are properly trained and qualified. The Act establishes the Optometrists and Opticians Board (the "Board") to regulate Optometrists and Opticians. All Optometrists and Opticians providing eye care services will need to be registered with the Optometrists and Opticians Board.

In view of this, The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) and Singapore Optometric Association (SOA) will be conducting a seminar to educate the public on the different roles of Opticians, Optometrists and Ophthalmologists, and as to which profession to approach for different eye conditions and disorders. During the event, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be signed between CASE and SOA. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets out the collaboration structure between CASE and SOA. In the MOU, CASE will provide mediation service to SOA members to resolve disputes with their clients, and SOA agrees to encourage their members to use CASE mediation service as a way to resolve disputes.

Both CASE and SOA feel that there is a need to convey to the public on the different roles of Opticians, Optometrists and Ophthalmologists as the public is oblivious to each specific role. Enhancing the public's knowledge of the different professions will lead to more efficient management of our eye care system.

CASE received 76 cases in 2007, 93 cases in 2006 and 71 cases in 2005 against the eye care providers. Although the number of cases is not as large as some other industries and professions, there is a need

to address these concerns against the optometry industry as CASE's mission is to protect and enhance consumers' interests through information and education.

Free eye screening services will also be conducted by a team of Optometrists and Ophthalmologist at the seminar. Patients diagnosed with pathological eye conditions will be referred to polyclinics.

Guest speakers from SOA will give presentations on the following:

- Different roles of Opticians, Optometrists and Ophthalmologists in the new legislation
- Types of refractive errors and the types of correction
- Safe contact lens wear
- Common eye diseases (Cataract, Glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy, Age related macular degeneration)

The free eye screening service is on a first come first served basis by registration as there are limited spaces. Refreshments and lunch will also be provided. Admission to the seminar is free.

Date: 6 January 2008, Sunday
 Time: 9am – 5pm
 Venue: NTUC Building, Room 701
 No.1, Marina Boulevard
 Level 7, One Marina Boulevard
 Singapore 018989

Roles of the different eye care professionals:-

1. Opticians are split into 3 categories
 - Opticians - Dispensing only.
 Allowed to prepare, adjust and dispense spectacles from a prescription written out by an Ophthalmologist or Optometrist. They are also permitted to duplicate a prescription from a previous pair.

- Opticians - Dispensing and Refraction.
All of the above plus permitted to measure your power to make a pair of spectacles. They are not allowed to provide you with a prescription.
- Opticians with Dispensing, Refraction and contact lens privileges.
All of the above plus the prescribing and fitting of contact lenses. They are also permitted to provide aftercare services for contact lens patients.

Please Note: Opticians may perform refraction for patients who are 8 years old and above.

2. Optometrist

- All of the above plus detecting, diagnosing and managing eye problems.

Please Note: If your child is below the age of 8, please consult with an Optometrist.

3. Ophthalmologist

- All of the above plus sophisticated diagnostic techniques, surgery and treatment with medication.

In view of the above, CASE and SOA would also like to provide the following tips to consumers:

- 1) Consult an Optometrist before proceeding to correct your eyesight. Optometrists are trained to diagnose eye problems and pathologies. Your Optometrist should be fully equipped with instruments in order to provide a comprehensive Optometric primary eye care examination and assist in making the correct diagnosis. If necessary, the Optometrist will refer you to see an Ophthalmologist for treatment. This will save cost for the consumer as it is cheaper to see an Optometrist than an Ophthalmologist. This will also free up more time for the Ophthalmologists to perform surgery or attend to more urgent eye problems.
- 2) Exercise proper contact lens care. For instance, go for aftercare 6 monthly, and buy your contact lens from Optometrists or Opticians with contact lens privileges. Do not over-wear your contact lens.
- 3) It is important that you approach a registered Optometrist for the proper eye care advice. Inform your Optometrist if there is any unusual or persistent irritation, redness or pain.

- 4) Visit Optometrists for regular eye check-ups even if you have perfect eyesight. Your Optometrist will refer you to the Ophthalmologist for treatment when necessary.
- 5) Take time to read the terms and conditions (usually in small print) stated in the contracts/receipts. If in doubt, always clarify and ensure that any amendments or additions are committed in writing so as to avoid any dispute thereafter.
- 6) The market conduct of the Opticians, Optometrists and Ophthalmologists are covered by the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act and if they misrepresent or make misleading claims, consumers have the right to seek redress.
- 7) Consumers who need our assistance could come to our CASE main office at Ghim Moh or call our hotline at 6463-1811.
- 8) Consumers may approach the Singapore Optometric Association (SOA) for assistance with regards to the professional conduct of Optometrists. Please refer to SOA's website at www.optometrists.org.sg. If SOA is unable to resolve the dispute, the consumer will be referred to CASE.
- 9) Consumers can refer to www.oob.moh.gov.sg for the list of registered Opticians and Optometrists.