

Therapeutics in Victoria hits 60%

Just on 60% of optometrists registered to practice in Victoria now have therapeutic endorsement of their registration.

This will likely continue to rise as a percentage of the whole profession over time, given that all optometrists entering the profession will graduate qualified to prescribe ocular S4s, and the under new standards for general registration for overseas applicants introduced in December, will be required to have completed an approved course of study in therapeutics.

Legislation was first approved in the Victorian Parliament in 1996 allowing

optometrists to prescribe scheduled medicines. It has now been fifteen years since the first Graduate Certificate in Ocular Therapeutics was offered at the University of Melbourne (2002). In October 2004, 161 optometrists had graduated with the qualification. Victoria was the first state to legislate to allow optometrists to prescribe scheduled medicines. Laws were introduced in Tasmania, NSW (2002), Qld (2003), SA (2007), with WA being the last State to legalise optometry prescribing.

However, it was not until January 2008 that optometrists, although able to write prescriptions, were able to do

so under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, meaning that optometry patients were for many years unable to obtain prescriptions at the subsidised rate.

In general, optometrists undertaking therapeutics training did so through graduate training programs offered through the Melbourne University, the University of NSW, or Queensland University of Technology. The Australian College of Optometry's Graduate Certificate in Ocular Therapeutics (ACOT) is a recently developed course that includes flexible online methods of learning, including webinars lectures and online forums.