



ADVISORY NO. COI - 2

[Please file in your ACO Practitioner Manual in the “Advisories” Section. Replaces Advisory No. COI - 1]

Date: January 1, 2008

Subject: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

It is the opinion of the Alberta College of Optometrists that our members make their professional decisions based on the best interests of their patients. A conflict of interest is defined as a clash between the member’s duty to act in the patient’s best interests as opposed to the member’s opportunity for personal gain. The conflict may be direct, indirect, real, perceived, of a financial nature, or otherwise.

The member need not actually take advantage of the opportunity for a conflict to exist. A conflict is deemed to exist if a professional or business arrangement presents a situation that affects the clinical decision of a practitioner or influences his/her clinical judgment.

To attempt to identify all potential forms of conflict is a daunting task and one that is certain to be incomplete. As a result, the Alberta College of Optometrists has produced the following general principle-based framework for conduct, and trusts that all members will govern themselves accordingly.

It is not ethical to:

- [a] Have your professional decision making and judgment skills influenced or controlled by other persons, business entities, corporations or any other factor other than the optometrist’s own professional judgment, Health Professions Act, Optometrists Professional Regulation, ACO By-laws, Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice, Guidelines and Alberta College of Optometrists Practice Advisories.

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- [b] Employ, pay, reward or agree to employ, pay or reward any person or business entity in any manner for services to solicit or steer patients for patronage to themselves or any other member other than normal and customary paid advertising.
- [c] Direct a patient to a diagnostic, treatment or optical dispensing facility where the member has a business interest or derives a profit from unless the patient is informed of the member's interest or ownership ahead of time and the patient is given a choice to attend any other facility of their choosing.
- [d] Derive a profit from dispensing or recommending a particular brand of product other than the usual volume or advance payment rebates available to other practitioners.
- [e] Permit, counsel or assist any person who is not a regulated member to practice optometry.
- [f] Recommend or provide diagnostic or treatment services that are not in the best interests of the patient or required by the patient.