

# STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

## TELEMEDICINE IN OPTOMETRY/OCULAR TELEMEDICINE

<b>Name:</b>	Telemedicine in Optometry/Ocular Telemedicine
<b>Date Approved:</b>	09/30/2016
<b>Date Updated:</b>	09/30/2016, 09/15/2018, 02/08/2020, 09/15/2023, 03/08/2024
<b>Date Effective:</b>	10/15/2024
<b>Number:</b>	SP-PM-11
<b>Type:</b>	Practice Management Standards (PM)
<b>Reference:</b>	<b>03.08.2024 MOTION</b> "To amend SP-PM-11 Telemedicine in Optometry/Ocular Telemedicine as presented." CARRIED.

The role of the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists (SAO) is to regulate the practice of optometry in Saskatchewan by ensuring members adhere to: *The Optometry Act, 1985*, The Optometric Professional Bylaws, The Standards of Practice, Policies and Guidelines of the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists. Members may choose the equipment and delivery methods of care, including in-person, remote, synchronous or asynchronous care provided the minimum standards of care are maintained and the optometrist is acting in the best interest of the patient.

### Terminology

**Telemedicine** – encompasses the delivery of remote clinical services and is defined as the remote diagnosis and treatment of patients by means of telecommunications technology.

**Telemedicine in optometry (or ocular telemedicine)** – is the remote provision of eye, adnexa, visual systems and related systemic health care services (collectively "eye, health, and vision services"). Asynchronous and synchronous technologies can be used to provide this type of care including videoconferencing, Internet-based services, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless communications. <sup>i</sup>

**Telehealth** – is a broad term encompassing non-clinical services, such as clinician training, administrative meetings, and continuing medical education, and including telemedicine.

The SAO supports the use of telemedicine to expand patient access to care, improve coordination of care and enhance communication amongst health care practitioners involved in caring for a patient, provided care can be provided high-value, high-quality eye, health and vision care can be delivered through this modality.

## Requirements for Delivering Care via Telemedicine:

- Must be licensed to practice optometry in the jurisdiction the patient is located. For greater clarity, if a patient is located in Saskatchewan the optometrist(s) delivering care must be licensed with the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists;
- Must adhere to: *The Optometry Act, 1985*, The Optometric Professional Bylaws, The Standards of Practice, Policies and Guidelines of the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists;
- Must possess, and be adequately trained on appropriate equipment and telecommunications technology to deliver patient care in a manner that meets the minimum requirements of the SAO;
- Must comply with all legislation, standards, policies and guidelines regarding privacy and security. For greater clarity optometrists must meet all requirements outlined in *The Health Information Protection (HIPA)*, Saskatchewan. Optometrists must also be aware of the additional privacy and security considerations of operating in a remote setting and develop policies and procedures to mitigate risk;
- All comprehensive eye exams must include the following components (whether in-person or remote):
  - Chief Concern
  - Ocular health & medical history
  - Allergies & drug reactions
  - Family history/risk factors
  - Verification of current optical prescription(s)
  - Aided and/or unaided entrance visual acuities
  - Binocular function and ocular motility
  - Determination of refractive error
  - External ocular health examination
  - Internal ocular health examination
  - Pupillary reflexes
  - Intraocular pressures (at minimum for ages 18+)
  - Treatment/referral/management plan
  - Problem specific testing as warranted by patient complaint and examination findings
- Must obtain valid informed consent, including explanation of the appropriateness, limitations, and privacy issues related to telemedicine to the patient, and recognizing that consent can be removed at any time;

- Must ensure at the outset that their identity, location and licensure status are communicated to the patient; and the identity and location of the patient is confirmed and recorded at each consultation; the identities of all other participants involved in the provision of care are disclosed to, and approved, by the patient in advance of receiving services and documented in the patient record;
- Must consider whether telemedicine affords adequate assessment of the presenting problem, and if it does not, arrange for timely in-person assessment. For further clarity clinics offering services remotely must be able to arrange/provide in-person care.
- Must control the subjective refraction for all exams where refraction forms part of the assessment;
- Must review professional liability insurance and other insurance policies to ensure adequate coverage for the delivery of care through remote means;
- Must create and maintain optometric records of the examination, in accordance with SAO requirements; and ensure patients have enduring access to their optometric records and that optometric records are available to other health care professionals for the provision of ongoing patient care;
- Must communicate with referring and other treating healthcare providers, and provide follow-up care as appropriate;
- Must ensure patients referred to specialists are adequately assessed and treated before referral, and that patients are advised about their options for accessing further optometric care.

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<sup>i</sup> Position Statement Regarding Telemedicine in Optometry. American Optometric Association  
[https://www.aoa.org/AOA/Documents/Advocacy/position%20statements/AOA\\_Policy\\_Telehealth.pdf](https://www.aoa.org/AOA/Documents/Advocacy/position%20statements/AOA_Policy_Telehealth.pdf).