

**Provision of appropriate care to patient with blurred vision**  
**16HDC01996, 11 June 2018**

*Optometrist ~ Optometry clinic ~ Small pupils ~ Macular degeneration ~  
Informed consent ~ Standards ~ Informed choice ~ Rights 4(1), 6(1), 7(1)*

A woman experiencing blurred vision attended an appointment with an optometrist. The optometrist did not obtain clinical notes or the clinical history from the consumer's previous provider.

During the appointment, the optometrist was unable to conduct an effective retinal examination owing to the woman's small pupils. According to the optometrist, the consumer was offered a dilated fundus examination. The optometrist's notes record that the examination was "deferred" but do not state why. The level of conversation that took place between the optometrist and woman is disputed.

Three years later, the woman attended another appointment with the optometrist. The optometrist identified macular scarring in one eye and recorded that the consumer had "a longstanding estropia". The level of discussion that took place about her condition and treatment plan is also disputed. Three months later, the woman had an appointment with an ophthalmologist, who diagnosed her with an epiretinal membrane and referred her to a vitreoretinal surgeon.

**Findings**

By failing to request appropriate information from the woman's previous healthcare provider, and failing to undertake standard procedures and appropriate testing, the optometrist did not have the information necessary to make an informed diagnosis, and was unable to make an appropriate diagnosis or take the appropriate follow-up actions. Accordingly, the optometrist failed to provide services to the woman with reasonable care and skill, and breached Right 4(1). By failing to provide information that a reasonable consumer would expect to receive in the circumstances, the optometrist breached Right 6(1). The woman was not in a position to make informed choices about her care and, accordingly, the optometrist also breached Right 7(1).

The clinic was not found in breach of the Code.

**Recommendations**

The optometrist was asked to provide a written report reflecting on her failings in the case, and a written apology.

The optometry clinic was asked to provide evidence that its policies had been considered in light of section 2.5 of the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board "Standards of Clinical Competence for Optometrists".

The Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board was asked to consider whether a competency review of the optometrist was warranted.