

Ageing Demographics and Increased Screen Time: Why Opticians and Optometrists Need Coverage

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In 2015, the aged 65 and older populations were forecast to rise by 3.7% annually until 2020. Today, researchers expect that trend to continue. The optometrist industry in Canada is predicted to experience strong growth due to the aging Canadian population, which frequently requires optometrist services.

Baby Boomers aren't the only ones who will require eye care, however. In Canada, eye doctors have noticed a rise in eye problems among children caused by online learning, video calls in place of in-person gatherings, and less time outside.

Approximately 72% of Canadian adults aged 18-39 years old use at least three electronic devices per day. Smartphones, laptops, tablets, and televisions are among the digital devices they use heavily. At least 90% of them have experienced some form of eye-related problem because of digital devices. (1) Other symptoms include tired eyes and headaches, a disturbed sleep cycle, neck and back pain.

Canada's need for optometrists and opticians is only expected to increase in the coming years. It's important, therefore, that these healthcare professionals are covered in the event of a lawsuit.

Increased Screen Time Leads to Eye Fatigue

In adults, symptoms related to screen use were common even before the pandemic. According to a 2017 joint statement from the Canadian Association of Optometrists and the Canadian Ophthalmological Society, the prevalence of eye symptoms related to electronic screens is estimated at 50–90 percent among adult users of electronic screens. Since the pandemic, however, more people have been using screens than before.

What Do Optometrists Do?

In Canada, optometrists are primarily engaged in private or group optometry practices. Optometrists perform eye exams to determine vision acuity and prescribe eyeglasses, contact lenses, and exercises for improving vision. In addition, they may also sell and fit prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses, a service provided by an optician.

Optometrists typically work with the following products and services:

- Eye exams
- Medical eye care procedures
- Contact lenses
- Prescription eyewear

Optometrists regularly perform the following tasks:

- Conducting eye examinations
- Diagnosing and treating vision impairment and eye disorders
- Prescribing, fitting and selling glasses and contact lenses

Optometry is a 1 billion dollar industry, with 5,717 clinics distributed across the country and 11,411 practicing optometrists. (2)

What Do Opticians Do?

An optician (or "dispensing optician") is a licensed professional who specializes in the fitting of eyeglass lenses, frames, contact lenses, and other vision-correction devices. Opticians in Canada must be licensed by an accredited ophthalmic institute, registered with a provincial regulatory agency, and licensed to dispense ophthalmics.

Opticians are highly skilled in treatment and technology for corrective lenses. But unlike an optometrist, they cannot write prescriptions or diagnose and treat eye diseases. In order to ensure a patient's vision needs are identified and corrected, optometrists and opticians work together.

There are about 6,900 opticians in Canada today.

What Can Go Wrong

Optometrists and opticians are required by their governing college to carry professional liability insurance since they are a regulated profession and highly skilled practitioners. That way, the optometrists are protected in the event of an incident causing bodily injury to the patient.

Some of the mistakes made by the optometrists are:

- Failure to diagnose eye conditions related to other diseases like diabetes
- Treat common eye issues like glaucoma
- Failure to dilute the pupil
- Incorrect measurement readings for prescription glasses causing nausea or vertigo
- Failure to tell patients about suspicious findings, its significance and the need for testing to determine if the disease is present
- Keeping poor records (3)

The MedThree Advantage

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Sources:

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