

## Prescribing Privileges for Optometrists

With the passage of *The Pharmacy Act, 1996* and Bylaws, other legislation has become effective to provide optometrists with prescribing privileges. Of specific relevance to members is subsection 10.12 of the Optometric Profession Bylaws which allows qualified optometrists to prescribe and use topical therapeutic agents for the treatment of ocular diseases and abnormal conditions, except for anti-glaucoma agents. The following interpretive guidelines have been prepared to assist members in the implementation of this bylaw:

- a) Only optometrists who hold a valid **Therapeutic Pharmaceutical Agents Certificate** are authorized to prescribe. Optometrists will verify their authority to prescribe when issuing prescriptions. For example, they have been asked to cite their certificate number on prescriptions which, when followed with the suffix "T", means that the optometrist in question is entitled to prescribe pursuant to the bylaw.

However, because these optometrists are also eligible to prescribe benefits under the Saskatchewan Prescription Drug Plan, SPDP will include these optometrists in their prescriber lists. The Drug Plan will provide future updates, as well as assign prescriber numbers which differ from the optometrists' certificate numbers. Use the **assigned prescriber** number, NOT the certificate number, when submitting claims to the Drug Plan.

- b) **Only topically applied ophthalmic pharmaceutical agents can be prescribed. Optometrists cannot prescribe oral, or anti-glaucoma, pharmaceutical agents.**
- c) All Optometrists licensed in Saskatchewan may order any pharmaceutical agent for **diagnostic purposes** within their scope of practice.
- d) The Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists (SAO) has asked that any suspected violation of the foregoing, such as prescriptions issued by non-authorized optometrists, or issued beyond these guidelines, should be reported to the SCP office. We, in turn, will refer the report to the SAO.