

Administrative Policy No 011

To: Council

From: Regulations Committee and Registrar

Date: January 27, 2021

Re: **Administrative Policy on Advertising Standards and Social Media Use**

All members shall take the appropriate steps to ensure that any advertising and social media communications relating to their professional practice is in accordance with the College's Regulatory Bylaw (31), The Opticians Act 15 (2)(n), and in the public interest.

Members must review any advertising or social media posts prepared by themselves or on their behalf in relation to their practice to ensure compliance with the College's bylaws and policies. If a member becomes aware of an advertisement that is in contravention of the College's bylaws or policies, the member will take reasonable steps to remove that advertisement. Members will ensure that public communications through social media or other public forums are conducted in accordance with the Standards of Practice, ensuring no breach of patient confidentiality or violation of patient boundaries.

Advertising with respect to a member's professional practice or place of professional practice that contains any of the following will be prohibited:

- Anything false, misleading, or not verifiable as accurate or true information.
- A claim of professional designation if the member does not hold a current licence issued by the College.
- The use of a member's name, photograph, or other likeness in an advertisement implying that the member's professional expertise is relevant to the advertisement's subject matter when it is not.
- The use of protected or copyright materials without prior written consent or permission.
- The use of any pictures or testimonials of patients without prior written consent.

Social media posts, whether on a member's professional or personal social media sites (such as but not limited to blogs, social networking sites, chat rooms, messaging boards, electronic newsletters, online forums) must not include any of the following:

- Inflammatory comments or disparaging remarks made about other members, other health professionals, or members of the public.
- No inappropriate comments or photographs that may be related to or cause potential harm to fellow members, the member's place of practice, or members of the public.

- Personal or confidential information that may be directly related to fellow members, other health professionals, or members of the public.

'*Incentivized reviews*' - Providing incentives to a patient in exchange for a positive review of a member's professional practice are prohibited due to the conflict of interest and potential breach of ethical behavior. Reviews are only valuable to the public when they are honest and unbiased.

Passed by Council on January 28, 2021