FORAC FAROC

Federation of Optometric Regulatory Authorities of Canada
Fédération des autorités réglementaires optométriques du Canada

FORAC-FAROC Position Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by Optometrists

FORAC-FAROC takes the position that AI may be used in optometric practice provided the patient's best interests, including their safety and well-being, are ensured and that optometrists adhere to provincial regulations, standards and ethical guidelines when applying AI to patient care.

Health Canada defines AI as a "broad term for a category of algorithms and models that perform tasks and exhibit behaviours such as learning, making decisions and predictions". Health Canada regulates the use of machine learning-enabled medical devices (MLMD). However, the application by individual health care practitioners of publicly available large-language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT and Bard AI is not regulated at any level.

The use of AI in the health care environment is rapidly changing, and regulatory policy has not evolved as quickly. This document provides guidelines for optometrists when considering the use of AI in their practices to ensure compliance with regulatory and patient safety requirements.

AI Use in Clinical Settings

The use of AI in health care settings may assist health care practitioners with many aspects of clinical practice, including:

- Assessment and analysis
- Treatment care plans
- Clinical decision support
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Education
- Documentation (AI scribes)

It is the responsibility of the health care practitioner, when using AI models, to ensure that information obtained is accurate, evidence-based and appropriate for the patient's needs.

Principles of AI Use in Optometric Practice

Patients' best interests and safety are respected when the following principles are applied:

1. ***Privacy, confidentiality and consent:*** Federal and provincial privacy legislation must be respected, particularly where patient health information and data is collected, stored and disclosed. Popular LLMs, such as ChatGPT, do not comply with privacy and security regulations. When using these AI tools, optometrists should take appropriate steps to

protect the confidentiality of patient health information. Patient consent must be obtained where required by provincial laws.

2. ***Accuracy and Reliability:*** Optometrists are ultimately responsible for the decisions they make about the care provided to a patient. When using AI in practice, the optometrist does not solely rely on the AI-generated information but uses critical thinking and clinical expertise to ensure that the information relied upon is correct and relevant to the patient. AI is not a substitute for the optometrist's knowledge, experience and clinical judgement.
3. ***Transparency:*** Patients must be made aware to what extent the optometrist is using AI when making clinical decisions.
4. ***Interpretation of results*****:** Optometrists use clinical judgement to decide if a result is appropriate in the patient's circumstance.
5. ***Bias*****:** Current AI models have a bias towards generic information based on the information that is available to it and may not be relevant to clinical findings for a specific patient.
6. ***Monitoring and Oversight*****:** Optometrists using AI in their practice must monitor its use to ensure is it appropriate and effective.

Summary

Optometrists are expected to provide patient care based on their own clinical judgement and expertise and may use AI as a supportive tool in their practices. Ultimately, optometrists are responsible to deliver safe ethical patient care, which is in accordance with legislation, standards of practice and codes of ethics of their province

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