



## **Peer Examination Information and Consent**

**Learning optometric examination techniques by practising on one another -  
What, why and how to do it well**

### **Definition:**

**“Peer examination”** is used in the Deakin School of Medicine to describe the practice of optometry students learning the skills of physical examination by examining one another.

**“Simulated procedure”** describes the practice of learning procedures or examination using actors (e.g. demonstration patients) and virtual reality environments.

### **Background:**

- The ability to competently perform an optometric examination is central to an optometrist's practice. Accurate examination technique is best learnt on real people.
- Examination of many different people, without major pathology, is vital in learning what range of findings constitutes “normal”, and subsequently being able to appreciate abnormal findings.
- It is vital that optometry students have a chance to practise how to interact with their patient.
- Peer examination also provides the student with an opportunity to appreciate the patient's perspective during the examination.
- Peer examination is a pragmatic necessity during the pre-clinical years (Year 2 and 3) of the optometry course. While it might be ideal to have a large and varied number of “real patients” to examine, this is not possible in a pre-clinical setting.

### **Specific Issues:**

- Examination of students of the opposite gender: To practise competently as an optometrist in Australia, a graduate is required to have mastered examination of both male and female patients. Bearing this in mind, every effort is made during undergraduate teaching to ensure that students practice examining both males and females. Optometrists need to be professional and respectful whilst examining patients of either gender - this behaviour is taught and expected of students during their training.



- **Cultural and religious constraints:** The Deakin School of Medicine considers respect of individual's cultural and religious circumstances to be of enormous importance. Where peer examination or simulated procedures create difficulties, these can be discussed discretely with the school to achieve a satisfactory balance between the need to learn the skills expected of an optometrist in Australia and the individual's circumstances.
- **Participation:** It is expected that all students will contribute in some way to the peer examination process. While certain students may elect not to have certain examinations performed on them, failure to participate in all roles ('optometrist', 'patient' and 'peer examiner') in the majority of the tutorials will seriously limit the student's opportunity to learn vital examination skills.
- **Optometric clinical procedures:** As part of the optometry program you will be taught, demonstrated and be given the opportunity to practise optometric clinical procedures. All of these procedures are considered standard to optometric care. Some of these procedures are invasive requiring a reasonable level of competency that can only be attained through practice. All invasive procedures will be clearly explained and supervised. You will be expected to be both the 'optometrist' and the 'patient'. Invasive optometry procedures carry a very low level of risk (if not negligible) of serious injury or complication. Ophthalmic diagnostic drugs will be employed as a necessary component of your training. These drugs are used routinely in optometric practice and the incidence of adverse events during their use is negligible, as will be explained to you.
- **Behaviour during examination:** The practice of peer examination is only acceptable if all participants adhere to the same professional standards expected of an optometrist. This means that consent to the examination must be obtained in good faith, without resort to coercion or peer group pressure. If either the simulated patient or the examining student feels uncomfortable with the process they should stop the examination and discuss this with the tutor. This is consistent with the professional standards expected of an optometrist.
- **Confidentiality:** Any finding made during the examination must be treated with the same confidentiality as it would be if the subject of the examination were a 'real' patient i.e. refractive error, family history and any abnormality.
- **Management of abnormalities found during physical examination:** Peer examination will be supervised by either a visiting optometrist or a member of the school's academic staff. If an abnormality is detected during examination the tutor will ensure that the student involved is appropriately informed, and, where indicated, advised to consult their optometrist for review. **Examination during a tutorial must never be assumed to be a substitute for an optometry assessment.**



## **PEER EXAMINATION CONSENT**

Given the variability of what may be required in different tutorials, consent to participate, as a simulated patient will be obtained as part of a particular tutorial. Any student may withdraw their consent at any time; however this may significantly diminish your experience and may impact your learning experience and competency in that optometry skill and associated assessments.

This document details the principles of peer examination and simulated procedures.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

**If you are a relative or personal friend to any Deakin School of Medicine staff member or Tutor, please list their names here:**

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*I agree to make known to Simon Backhouse (or the Course Director of Optometry) any possible problems or conflict of interest that may arise, as soon as I become aware of any such circumstances. I agree as best I can to inform Simon Backhouse of the possible problems that might arise so that a mutually acceptable plan can be devised.*

In signing this document, **you are acknowledging that you have read and understood the document, and agree to adhere to the principles outlined.**

Signature:

Name:

Date: