

## **Case Study: Advancing Optometric Scope of Practice in Asia Pacific region**

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**Name of Policy Document:** THERAPEUTIC AND INCREASE OF SCOPE OF PRACTICE.

The very purpose of legislation is essential for ensuring the quality and safety of medical care while protecting the rights and interests of all parties involved in the healthcare system with increased scope of practice. As we are moving ahead in this advanced era of innovation and technology and the industry continues to evolve, it is crucial role to addressing emerging challenges and trends within the scope of practice within framework.

AP region being very diverse wherein we have developed countries like Australia, Hongkong, New Zealand, Singapore and also have countries like Sri Lanka, Malaysia, where in still Optometrists are working hard on getting legislation done. Nepal is a great example where they have Code of Ethics for Optometrists is in place. Having legislation in place helps in improving access to comprehensive eye care services and achieved by granting optometrists the ability to prescribe medication and perform certain therapeutic procedures. Once the policy is done that will acknowledge the growing burden of vision impairment, the need for primary eye care providers, and the barriers to care that exist in the healthcare system. These barriers include geographical constraints, limited healthcare infrastructure, and disparities in access to services.

Indian Optometrists got its legislation and now optometry is recognized under health care and once implemented it will expand the scope of optometric practice, the drafted policy aims to improve patient outcomes, increase the range of healthcare providers, and foster collaboration within the healthcare system. Optometrists are able to provide primary eye care services, which can help to address the growing need for these services. The policy also promotes collaboration between optometrists and other healthcare providers, which can lead to better patient outcomes.

It is important that overall Code of Ethics for Optometrists should be done in each country of AP region and APCO is working close in assisting to this important policy that seeks to improve access to comprehensive eye care services and address the barriers to care that exist in the healthcare system. By expanding the scope of optometric practice and promoting collaboration between healthcare providers, the policy can help to improve patient outcomes and increase the range of healthcare providers available to patients.

### **Strategies and Processes:**

**Educational Initiatives:** Significant steps to enhance the clinical teaching and learning process in hospital settings is a choice in most of countries in AP region. As part of this initiative, students were required to maintain a logbook of patients they evaluated during treatment. Optometry schools imparted training in pharmacology, therapeutic procedures, and patient management to ensure that optometrists were well-equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. In parallel, continuous advocacy is being carried out in the few countries of Asia Pacific region with the Ministry of Health and Population to define the scope of practice of optometrists in the region.

**Advocacy and Grassroots Mobilization:** The associations are undertaking grassroots advocacy efforts to garner support for the policy amongst optometrists, healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the public. The said efforts included lobbying government officials, organizing public awareness campaigns, and leveraging partnerships with key stakeholders.

**Lobbying:** The associations are trying to identify sponsors within professional councils and worked in close conjunction with policy allies to draft and introduce the proposed policy. The lobbying efforts are primarily focused on enlightening policy makers about the critical role of expanding the scope of practice in optometry towards addressing unmet eye care needs and enhancing access to services. The significance of these efforts is underscored by the need to improve the overall quality of healthcare delivery in the country.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Optometrists are collaborating with other healthcare stakeholders, including ophthalmologists, primary care physicians, and community health workers, to garner support for the policy and foster collaboration within the healthcare system. The process of building consensus among diverse stakeholders was crucial to overcoming opposition and advancing the policy document. The engagement of other healthcare professionals was instrumental in achieving this goal. By working together, they will be able to bring their unique perspectives to the table and find common ground to achieve a

shared objective. This collaborative and inclusive approach not only will help to overcome opposition but also create a sense of ownership and buy-in from all stakeholders involved. Ultimately, it will lead to the successful implementation of the policy and improved healthcare outcomes for the community.

**Public Support and Awareness:** The associations are effectively trying to disseminate information to the public regarding the advantages of an extended optometric scope of practice through media outreach, community events, and patient testimonials. Generating public support and putting pressure on lawmakers to take action was achieved by emphasizing the effect it had on patient care and service accessibility.

### **Positive Outcomes:**

The ethical guidelines will empower them to take on additional responsibilities, including the ability to prescribe medication, undertake therapeutic procedures, and play a more active role in addressing the eye care needs of the population. As a result, there has been an improvement in access to comprehensive eye care services, reduced wait times for treatments, and a positive impact on patient outcomes. By elevating the role of optometrists within the healthcare system, this policy contributed to a more integrated and holistic approach to eye care delivery in the Asia Pacific region. The benefits of this policy is significant, and it play a vital role in ensuring that patients receive quality eye care services in a timely and efficient manner.

### **Challenges/Failures:**

The implementation of new healthcare initiatives is often hindered by resistance from various stakeholders. In the case of a recent healthcare initiative, opposition primarily are raised by ophthalmologists and medical associations, who expressed concerns regarding patient safety and professional boundaries. The resolution of these concerns required a sustained approach of dialogue, collaboration, and evidence-based advocacy. Through this approach, trust and consensus will be built among stakeholders, paving the way for the successful implementation of the initiative.

### **Final Result and Effect on Profession:**

The implementation of the Code of Ethics for Optometrists will mark a significant milestone in the advancement of optometry as a profession and the provision of eye care services in the Asia Pacific region. With the authority to prescribe medication and perform therapeutic procedures, optometrists will be granted a higher status as primary eye care practitioners and, in few countries, have given a broader role in addressing the eye health needs of the populace. As a result, patient care has been notably improved, accessibility to services increased, and optometrists are recognized as essential members of the healthcare team in the Asia Pacific region.