
**PROFESSIONAL BOARD FOR OPTOMETRY AND DISPENSING OPTICIANS AND THE
PROFESSIONAL BOARD FOR SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND HEARING PROFESSIONS**

**SCOPE INFRINGEMENT ON “HEARING ASSESSMENT” AND “FITTING OF
HEARING AIDS” PERFORMED BY OTHER PRACTITIONERS” AND/OR
“FRONTLINE” STAFF IN OPTOMETRY/DISPENSING OPTICIANRY PRACTICE**

Following numerous queries and complaints received by the Professional Board for Optometry and Dispensing Opticians (“the Professional Board”) regarding the performance of certain clinical and professional acts falling within the scope of the Speech, Language and Hearing Professions by practitioners registered within the profession of Optometry and Dispensing Opticians who are not qualified and competent to perform such clinical acts. The Professional Boards for Optometry and Dispensing Opticians and Speech, Language and Hearing Professions saw it fit to remind, inform and educate practitioners and the members of public that:

- “Rule 21 of the Ethical rules of conduct provides that: “A practitioner shall perform, except in an emergency, only a professional act -
(a) For which he or she is adequately educated, trained and sufficiently experienced; and
(b) Under proper conditions and in appropriate surroundings.
- It is illegal, for persons who are not registered in terms of the Health Professions Act to perform clinical and professional acts falling within the scope of the profession of Optometry and Dispensing Opticians and scope of the professions falling within Speech, Language and Hearing Professions. Any person who, without registration in terms of the Health Professions Act, performs clinical and professional acts falling within the scope of the profession of Optometry and Dispensing Optician and Speech, Language and Hearing Professions commits an offence in terms of section 17 of the Health Professions Act. The aforementioned offence attracts, among other things, imprisonment for a period not exceeding 12 months.
- Any registered practitioner who instructs any person who is not registered as an Audiologist in terms of the Health Professions Act to perform clinical and professional acts falling within the scope of the Speech, Language and Hearing Professions commits unprofessional conduct. The aforementioned unprofessional conduct attracts various sanctions in terms of section 42 of the Act.

EMPLOYMENT OF OTHER PRACTITIONER IN DEFFERENT SCOPES OF PROFESSION

In terms of Rule 8 (1) of the Ethical Rules, since an Audiologist cannot provide a supportive healthcare service to supplement an Optometrist, the employment of Audiologists/hearing Aid Acousticians by Optometrists or vice versa is prohibited. These are two distinct professions with distinct scopes of professions and are not registered in the same professional category.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY PRACTICES

Rule 8(3) of the Ethical Rules of Conduct provides that: “A practitioner shall practise in a partnership, association or as a juristic person only within the scope of the profession in respect of which he or she is registered under the Act.”

Rule 8(3) of the Ethical Rules of Conduct therefore prohibits practising as a juristic person in different scopes of professions. Section 54A of the Act therefore entitles practitioners to practise in an incorporated company. The Ethical Rules of Conduct provides for the practising as juristic person by practitioners who are registered in the same profession and who practise the same scope of the profession.

Optometrist may not practise in a juristic person or incorporated company with an Audiologists because these are two distinct professions with two distinct scopes of the professions.

Media statement issued by the Professional Boards for Optometry and Dispensing Opticians and Speech, Language and Hearing Professions.