

Position Statement

Promoting Continuing Competence for Orthoptists

Position

The International Orthoptic Association (IOA) believes that orthoptists should practice within their level of competence and actively pursue continuous lifelong learning to maintain competence in existing and emerging areas of her/his practice. Lifelong learning is a fundamental responsibility of each professional member and the need to continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills in order to keep current in today's scientific and technologically complex eye care environment is a pillar of professional self-regulation. The significance of this tenet is emphasized in the Orthoptistes de la Communauté Européenne (OCE) Code of Ethics (2016) which states that orthoptists have a duty to “maintain and develop their knowledge and skills throughout their careers and enhance their practice based on best available evidence and professional consensus.

Continuing competency enables orthoptists to base their practice on the strongest evidence necessary to produce high-quality patient outcomes, assist in preventing poor practice and protect the public. To practise safely and competently, orthoptists comply with professional standards, base their practice on relevant evidence, adhere to their national or international Code of Ethics and continually acquire new competencies in their area of practice.

Responsibilities:

Individual orthoptists, regulatory orthoptic organizations, professional associations, employers, educational institutions and governments share the responsibility to promote continuing competence. The following list describes some of these responsibilities.

Individual orthoptists are responsible for:

- demonstrating commitment to continuing competence through lifelong learning, reflective practice and integrating learning into orthoptic practice
- ensuring that their competencies are relevant and up to date on a continuing basis in relation to the patients they serve
- seeking out quality educational experiences relevant to their area of practice
- supporting each other in demonstrating, developing and maintaining competence
- working with employers to ensure that their workplaces support continuing competence

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- meeting the requirements of their regulatory body for continuing competence

Professional and regulatory organizations are accountable to the public for:

- promoting safe, ethical and competent care by orthoptists throughout their careers
- promoting, developing, maintaining, monitoring and evaluating high-quality continuing competence programs based on a code of ethics and standards of practice
- establishing effective continuing competence programs. These programs must be flexible, be applicable in a variety of settings, provide options for demonstrating continuing competence and be clearly communicated to all stakeholders

Orthoptic educators are responsible for:

- providing opportunities for orthoptists entering the profession to develop skills for lifelong learning and continuing competence
- working with orthoptists and orthoptic organizations and other stakeholders to promote high-quality continuing education opportunities for orthoptists

Employers of orthoptists have the responsibility to:

- put mechanisms in place that promote orthoptists' identification of knowledge, skills and personal attributes they require for practice
- maintain quality practice environments that support and foster continuing competence and continuing competence programs (e.g., preceptorship, mentorship, certification and staff development programs)

Governments have the responsibility to:

- facilitate collaboration amongst the orthoptic profession, educational institutions and the ministries of health and education to ensure that high-quality programs are available to support the continuing competence of orthoptists

Definitions

Continuing Competence

The ongoing ability of an orthoptist to integrate and apply knowledge, skills, judgement and personal attributes required to practice safely and ethically in a designated role and setting.



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Maintaining this ongoing ability involves a continuous process linking the code of ethics, standards of practice, and life-long learning. The qualified orthoptist reflects on her/his practice on an ongoing basis and takes action to continually improve that practice.

Continuing Competence Program

A program that focuses on the maintenance and acquirement of competence of the qualified orthoptists throughout their careers.

Approved by the IOA Council of Management March 16, 2018

Reference

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1. The Orthoptistes de la Communauté Européenne (OCE) Code of Ethics - Principles of Professional Behaviour (2016) pg 3. <https://www.internationalorthoptics.org/code-of-ethics.html>