

The World Council of Optometry

Meeting of the General Delegates to be held 5 June 2009

Jamaica Country Report

Number of Optometrists: 20

Number of Ophthalmologists: 42

Contact Information

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Scope of Practice

We are governed by the archaic Opticians Act of 1926, which does not allow the use of Diagnostic and Therapeutic drugs. For the past 30 very frustrating and disappointing years we have been trying to have the law amended. Unfortunately, one of our members, who would have been very instrumental in having the amended law passed, died last year, as did the Chief Medical Officer with whom we were lobbying fairly successfully. It seems that we have to start all over.

The Regulatory Body for optometrists is The Optometry Board, which consists of the Chief Medical Officer, the President and Vice President of The Jamaica Optometric Association, and an Ophthalmologist.

Our members are mostly US or British trained. The British trained optometrists have participated in US therapeutic courses to update themselves in the eventuality that the law is amended.

The majority of our members practice in the capital, Kingston. They are in private practice – independent or with multiples. There are no optometrists working in the government clinics because no positions have been made available.

Due to the Law of 1926, many Jamaican optometrists do not return home to practice. We are trying to encourage students to enter the profession so we may increase our numbers and in turn get the Opticians Act amended.

Programmes Involving Optometrists

The members help to provide vision screening in the schools, assist persons needing eye care in communities and assist with the Special Olympics Healthy Eyes Athlete Program.