

From: AthwalEye
Sent: Sunday, March 14, 2004 11:45 AM
To: CONTACTLENSRULE;
Subject: Contact lens act

I would like to make the following suggestions regarding the "eight business hour" response requirement that is being considered. This time frame for response is not going to be feasible for many practices. Consider the following scenarios:

1. Our practice has a part-time optometrist that fits and prescribes all contact lenses. He only works in the office one day per week. His primary practice is located 45 minutes away. If there is a request for a contact lens prescription, he would not be able to respond until he is in the office in the following week. If he is on vacation, he would not be able to respond for 2-3 weeks.

2. The rare contact lens patient that I might be managing may have to wait 3 days until I can respond. I am not in the office on Wednesday and Thursdays because I am performing surgery. The wait could be longer, 2-3 weeks if I am on vacation or away at a conference.

The important issue is that patients should be able to request contact lens prescriptions at the time of their eye exams and have the ability to purchase contact lenses elsewhere. But, if they lose this prescription, it should not impose a burden on the provider.

Contact lens prescriptions are not an emergency. Patients are capable of determining a few months ahead of time when their contact lens supply will finish. They can request prescriptions several months ahead of time. Therefore, providers should be allowed ample time to respond to prescription requests. These requests should be treated similar to record release requests. Providers should be given a minimum of 1 month time to respond.

I am sure that providers will respond as quickly as possible. They should not be forced into a situation where they are at risk of breaking the law. Patients should bear the burden of responsibility to request prescriptions in a timely manner.

Barinder Athwal, MD