



OPTOMETRISTS AND OPTICIANS BOARD

Annual Report

2012



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1. OPTOMETRISTS AND OPTICIANS BOARD MEMBERS

Position	Name	Designation
Chairman	Dr. Khoo Chong Yew	Ophthalmologist Raffles Eye Centre
Director-General of Education (Representative)	Mr. K. Govindan	Senior Quality Assessor School Appraisal Branch Schools Division Ministry of Education
Registrar	Dr. Harold Tan	Registrar (OOB) Ministry of Health
Members	Dr. Anna Yeo	Senior Lecturer Singapore Polytechnic
	Mr. Anthony Tay	Optometrist Western Eyecare Pte Ltd
	Mr. Chandra Mohan K Nair	Advocate & Solicitor Tan Rajah & Cheah
	Ms. Caroline Lau	Optician (Refraction & Dispensing) Yi Eyecare Pte Ltd
	Ms. Jacqueline Tay	Optometrist Singapore National Eye Centre
	Dr. Lim Boon Ang	Ophthalmologist Department of Ophthalmology Tan Tock Seng Hospital
	Mr. Peter Koh	Optician (Contact Lens Practitioner) The Lens Men and The Eye Site
	Mr. Roland J Izaac	Optometrist Philip D Izaac Pte Ltd
	Dr. Yvonne Ling	Ophthalmologist Singapore National Eye Centre

2. CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

2012 was a fruitful year for the Optometrists and Opticians Board with new milestones being achieved and has continued to maintain the professional standards since the Optometrists and Opticians Act was enacted in 2007.

I am pleased to announce that the first cohort of 40 optometrists diploma students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic has successfully graduated in March 2012. Similarly, the Institute of Technical Education saw their first batch of 30 opticians in December 2012. Both courses are currently provisionally accredited by the Board, and will be completing the final stages of review for full accreditation in the upcoming year.

In January 2012, the Optometrists and Opticians (Composition of Offence) Regulations was gazetted and has come in operation since February 2012. The new regulation gives the Board greater flexibility to compound minor offences which carry convictions under the Optometrists and Opticians Act. I would like to remind all registrants to observe the practice guidelines stipulated by the Board.

The Board will continue to fulfill its functions and uphold professional standards and ethics for the practice of optometry and opticianry. We hope to engage more professionals from the industry as the optometry and opticianry profession progress to bring the primary eye care to the next level.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board members, optometrists and opticians who served in the various committees as well as all other registrants of the Board who have given their time and effort for the profession selflessly.

Dr Khoo Chong Yew
Chairman
Optometrists and Opticians Board

3. INTRODUCTION

The Optometrists and Opticians Board (the “Board”) is a professional Board established under the Optometrists & Opticians Act (Chapter 213A) (the “Act”) that was passed in the parliament in July 2007. The Act serves to ensure that those who provide eye care services in Singapore are qualified and properly trained so as to assure the public receives quality eye care services.

The Board sets the standards required for registration, approves registration, and practising certificates for optometrists and opticians, and regulates the conduct and practice of optometrists and opticians. As at 31st Dec 2012, the Board has in the register a total of 2,348 registered optometrists and opticians.

Table 1- No. of registrants in each category from 2008 to 2012

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Optometrists	588	729	754	820	893
Optician (R + D)	1,335	1,325	1,293	1,280	1,289
Optician (D)	177	175	222	204	140
Optician (CLP)	65	27	27	27	26
Total	2,165	2,256	2,296	2,331	2,348

Under the Optometrists and Opticians Act (Chapter 213A), the Minister can appoint 10 to 12 members to establish the Board. The current Board members are made up of 3 Ophthalmologists, 4 Optometrists and 2 Opticians from both private and public sectors. The remaining 3 members are the registrar of the Optometrists and Opticians Board, a representative from the Ministry of Education and a Lay Member to represent the interest of persons receiving optometry and opticianry service.

The functions of the Board as prescribed by the Act are:

- a) To approve or reject applications for registration under the Act and to approve any such applications subject to such restrictions as it may think fit;
- b) To accredit courses in the practice of optometry and opticianry in Singapore for the purposes of registration;
- c) To issue guidelines on the standards for the practice of optometry and opticianry;
- d) To make recommendations to the appropriate authorities for the training and education of optometrists and opticians;
- e) To determine and regulate the conduct and ethics of optometrists and opticians; and
- f) Generally to do all such acts, matters and things as are necessary to be carried out under or for the purpose of the Act.

4. KEY HIGHLIGHTS

4.1 ACCREDITATION

One of the Board's functions is to accredit courses in the practice of optometry and opticianry in Singapore for the purposes of registration. To maintain the education and practice standards, the Board has set up an accreditation framework to recognize local optometry and opticianry courses.

Institutions who are keen to run opticianry or optometry course can request for a copy of accreditation checklist from the Board. The Board would review the submissions and grant provisional accreditation to the courses that had fulfilled the stipulated requirements. These provisionally accredited courses are then allowed to recruit students and start running of the course. However, they would have to pass the course audits in order to receive full accreditation and finally be gazetted in the Schedule of the Act.

Currently, local optometry and opticianry qualifications recognized by the Board includes Diploma in Optometry, Advance Certificate of Performance in Ophthalmic Dispensing and Refraction (ACOPOD+R) and Advance Certificate of Performance in Ophthalmic Dispensing (ACOPOD) by Singapore Polytechnic (SP).

In 2012, besides SP, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) is the second local institution that has started and produced its first batch of graduates from Diploma in Optometry. Graduates are eligible to apply as optometrists under provisional registration. In the same year, Institute of Technical Education (ITE) has also produced their first batch of graduates from NITEC in Opticianry. Graduates are eligible to apply as opticians (refraction and dispensing).

Both courses are in the progress of completing course audits for full accreditation. With additional graduates from the NP and ITE, more professionals will be joining the industry to serve the community. The Board will continue to work with institutions to upkeep the quality of local courses.

4.2 COMPOSITION OF OFFENCE

In exercising the power conferred by section 37(2)(q) of the Act, the Minister for Health approved the following Regulations to be cited at the Optometrists and Opticians (Composition of Offences) Regulations 2012. These regulations came into force on 1st February 2012.

Where a registered person is liable for conviction of offences under the Act, the Board may, instead of prosecution, compound the offences prescribed as compoundable offences. The following offences have been prescribed as compoundable offences under the new regulation:

- a) Section 13(3)(a): Any registered person who fails to inform Registrar of changes to his personal particulars and practice address within 28 days of the change;
- b) Section 17(2) and 18(6): Any registered person who fails to surrender his certificate of registration and practising certificate to the Board within the specified period after he has had his registration cancelled or suspended by the Board; and
- c) Section 25(1):
 - (i) Any registered person who does not hold a valid practising certificate but carries out the practice of optometry or opticianry and/or advertises or holds himself out to be a practising optometrist or optician; and

- (ii) Any registered person with a valid practising certificate who does not carry out his practice in accordance with prescribed conditions.

The Board would like to remind all registrants to take note of the above regulations.

4.3 INSPECTIONS

A total of 99 optical shops and clinics were inspected in 2012 for compliance relating to the practice of optometry and opticianry, and the Act.

Common non-compliances noted from the inspections included failure to report lost or missing Registration Certificate (RC) and Practising Certificate (PC), failure to display RC and/or PC prominently and failure to update work particulars.

All registrants who were found to be non-compliant were issued with stern reminders. The Board would like to take this opportunity to remind all registered optometrists and opticians to be mindful of their duties and obligations as registered professionals. Registrants with repeated non-compliant behaviour may be subject to disciplinary action. All registrants are strongly advised to adhere to the stipulated Act and Regulations at all times.

4.4 REGISTRATIONS

New Registrants

Since the Board started regulating the industry in 2008, there has been a steady supply of optometrists and opticians.

Table 2- New registrants from 2008 to 2012

Register Type	2009	2010	2011	2012
Optometrists	77	117	176	135
Optician (Dispensing)	6	26	51	27
Optician (Refraction + Dispensing)	23	72	81	74
Total	106	215	308	236

4.5 CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION (CPE)

The 4th run of voluntary CPE program started from 1st October 2011 and ended on 30th September 2012. The Board received 19 submissions of which 7 participants were awarded with Certificate of Commendation.

A total of 87 activities in optometry and opticianry were accredited. Out of the 87 activities, 24 activities were public events while the remaining 63 activities were in-house training events in public hospitals.

The CPE programmes include structured education activities that serve to maintain, develop or increase the knowledge, skills and professional practice of optometrists and opticians. All optometrists and opticians are strongly encouraged to participate in continuing education activities to ensure continued competence in the provision of services to the public.

For an updated calendar list of events, please visit the Board's website at www.oob.gov.sg.

5. COMPLAINTS

5.1 COMPLAINTS AGAINST OPTOMETRISTS AND OPTICIANS

The Board received a total of 3 complaints against registered optometrists and opticians in 2012. These are summarized below.

Complaint 1

The Board received a complaint lodged against an optometrist in March 2011 alleging that the optometrist had prescribed and dispensed wrong lenses for the complainant's 9 year-old daughter, which resulted in deterioration of the daughter's refractive error.

The optometrist claimed that he had performed the eye test and verified patient's prescription. He also stated that the verification of ophthalmic lenses was usually done after edging or receiving the lenses from the laboratory. Upon inquiry, it was also established that an opticianry student had replaced a frame for the patient as it was still under warranty. Thus the lenses could have been swapped during the replacement of the frame.

The Board concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine whether the optometrist had prescribed and dispensed wrong lenses to the patient. However, it was evident that the optometrist had failed to verify the lenses before it was dispensed. The optometrist was issued a letter of advice to remind him of the professional duties of a registered optometrist and to ensure proper documentation of patients' visits.

Complaint 2

In March 2012, an ophthalmologist lodged a complaint against an optometrist for professional misconduct. The optometrist had complained to Singapore Medical Council (SMC) earlier in July 2010 that the ophthalmologist had included an inappropriate statement in the prescription. The statement had indicated that the final responsibility lies with the optometrist who must ensure customer's satisfaction when providing glasses. The complainant was of the view that the optometrist did not assume professional responsibility for patients under his care, and attempted to resolve the matter in an unprofessional manner.

Upon inquiry and deliberation, the Board opined that it is the responsibility of any eye care professional (ophthalmologist or optometrist) to ensure the appropriateness and accuracy of the prescription issued. It is also reasonable for patients to hold their prescribers directly responsible for the prescriptions they received, regardless of whether the prescriber is an ophthalmologist or optometrist.

The optometrist was subsequently issued with a letter advising him that the dispute could have been resolved in a more professional manner by clarifying with the ophthalmologist instead of lodging a complaint against the ophthalmologist with another regulator.

Complaint 3

The Board received a complaint against a registered optician and an intern working at a retail outlet. The complainant had claimed that the intern performed eye test and glasses were made based on the intern's findings without consultation or re-assessment by the supervisor. The complainant later demanded a full refund as it was discovered that the supervisor had concealed the defects on the complainant's frame with a marker. Although it was explained to the complainant that interns undergoing accredited programmes in Singapore were allowed to practise under supervision, the

complainant was in the view that as the supervisor was not around that day, there was no actual supervision of the intern.

After further inquiry, the Board deemed that there was no professional misconduct on supervisor's part as proper patient records were established and the dispensing of spectacles was handled in accordance with the professional practice guidelines. The Board had noted that it was important that the assigned supervisor should be around when the student was practising, and that all prescriptions should be vetted by the supervisor. As such, a letter of advice was issued to the supervisor on the role as a supervisor to ensure interns had provided proper prescriptions to customers in future

5.2 UNLAWFUL ENGAGEMENT IN OPTOMETRY

The Board received an application for registration as a qualified optometrist in November 2009. In the application form, the applicant declared practising optometry during the period of July 2007 to November 2009.

Investigations revealed that the applicant held a recognized optometry qualification and was registered as a Contact Lens Practitioner under Health Science Authority until 2007. The practitioner later applied for registration with the Board in 2009 but the registration was not completed. The Secretariat contacted and reminded the practitioner that any person who wishes to practise optometry and opticianry needs to be registered with the Board.

The Board received the application later, but had found that during the employment with a lens manufacturer before the registration, the practitioner had carried out the practice of optometry by checking lens power and conducting occasional eye screenings for customers, which contravened section 25(1) of the Act. Considering the circumstances of the case, the Public Prosecutor decided to administer a stern letter of warning in lieu of prosecution to the practitioner in April 2012.

5.3 FRIVOLOUS CASE SUBMISSION UNDER SUPERVISORY FRAMEWORK

A provisional registrant had submitted case logs to the Board for review in December 2010. During the review, discrepancies were discovered and cases were suspected to have been fabricated. An interview was held by the Credential Committee of the Board to further establish the authenticity of the cases submitted. The issue was subsequently referred to the Ministry of Health for further investigation for providing false information to obtain registration with the board.

The investigation concluded in February 2012 and the provisional registrant was deemed to have contravened an offence under Regulation (8) of the Optometrists and Opticians (Practice, Conduct, Ethics & Publicity) Regulations. After consideration, the Deputy Public Prosecutor (DPP) directed that a stern letter of warning be administered to the provisional registrant for failure to keep proper records and to enable proper aftercare for her patients.

Disciplinary action was also taken against the registrant. The Board decided to issue a letter of warning to the registrant and reminded her to ensure proper and accurate keeping of patient records. As the registrant had applied for second term provisional registration, the Board gave the registrant a final opportunity to repeat entire supervisory framework subject to additional conditions prescribed.

5.4 CONVICTIONS

Poon Lai Yin and Tan Wee Yeow

The Board was alerted by an informant that an optical company had been employing unregistered practitioners to practise opticianry.

Investigations revealed that a registered Optician, Poon Lai Yin, who was also the sole proprietor of the optical company, had employed an unregistered person, Tan Wee Yeow to work as an optician since 2008. Despite knowing that Tan Wee Yeow was not registered with the Board as an optician, Poon Lai Yin continued to allow him to practice opticianry.

Poon Lai Yin was found guilty of contravening section 25(2) of the Optometrists and Opticians Act and was fined \$12,000.

Tan Wee Yeow was also found guilty of contravening section 25(1) of the Optometrists and Opticians Act and was fined \$5,000.

Siow Swee Tin and Kho Liang Ti

In December 2011, the Board received an application for registration from Kho Liang Ti. During the review of her application, the Board noted that Kho Liang Ti declared that she was working as an optician in her workplace and had been practising opticianry even though she was not registered.

Investigations revealed that registered Optician, Siow Swee Tin hired Kho Liang Ti as a sales assistant and deployed her to work at one of his outlets. Further investigations revealed that Kho Liang Ti had performed refraction for customers even though she was not registered as an optician. She was later charged in court for unlawful engagement of opticianry practice under section 25(1) of the Act, and was fined \$1,500 in November 2012.

Siow Swee Tin was also found guilty for hiring an unregistered person to practise opticianry under section 25(2) of the Act and was fined \$3,000.

5.5 ONLINE SALES OF CONTACT LENSES AND PRESCRIPTIVE OPTICAL PRODUCTS

Several informants have alerted the Board on the sale of contact lenses and prescriptive optical products via online portals such as Facebook, blogs, websites and Groupon.

Contact lenses are considered as medical devices. They cannot be sold, dispensed or supplied directly to end-users without proper eye assessments conducted by a registered optometrist or registered optician (contact lens practice). All contact lenses must be prescribed and dispensed only by registered optometrists and qualified opticians (contact lens practice) who are qualified to handle them.

In 2012, the Board issued a total of 34 advisory letters to online sellers who were noted to be selling contact lenses and/or prescriptive optical products to the members of the public. Many sellers have since ceased the sale of these items on their websites. Recalcitrant sellers were referred to the Ministry of Health for investigation.

Under section 25(1) of the Optometrists and Opticians Act, no person shall carry out any practice of optometry or opticianry unless he is a qualified person in respect of the practice of optometry or opticianry in question, and he carries out that practice in accordance with the prescribed conditions. Any person who contravenes this section shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$25,000 or imprisonment not exceeding 6 months, or both.

APPENDIX I:

1. Profiles of Optometrists 2012

Chart 1.1- No. Of Optometrists By Registration Types

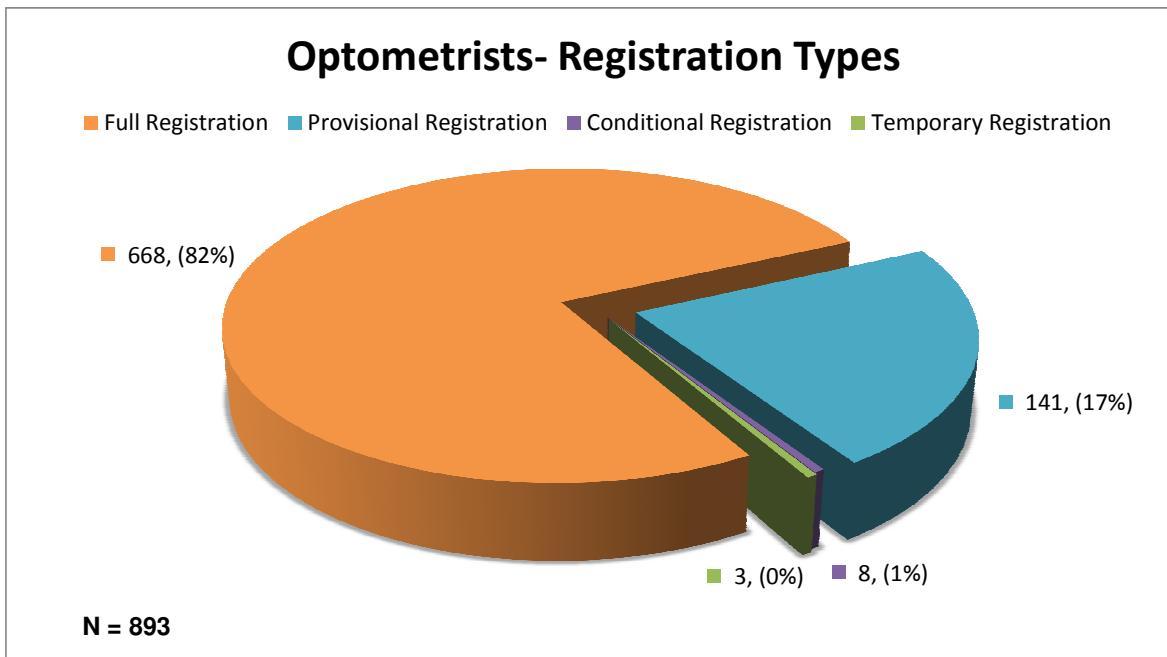


Chart 1.2- No. Of Optometrist By Age Group

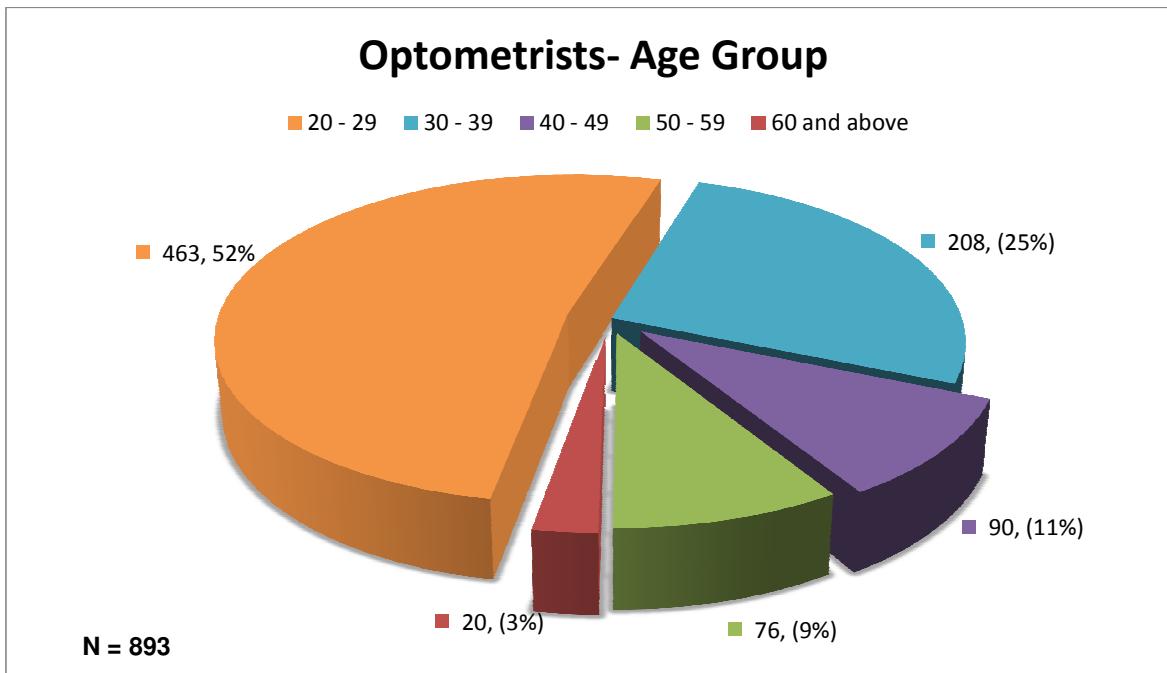


Chart 1.3- No. Of Optometrist By Nationality

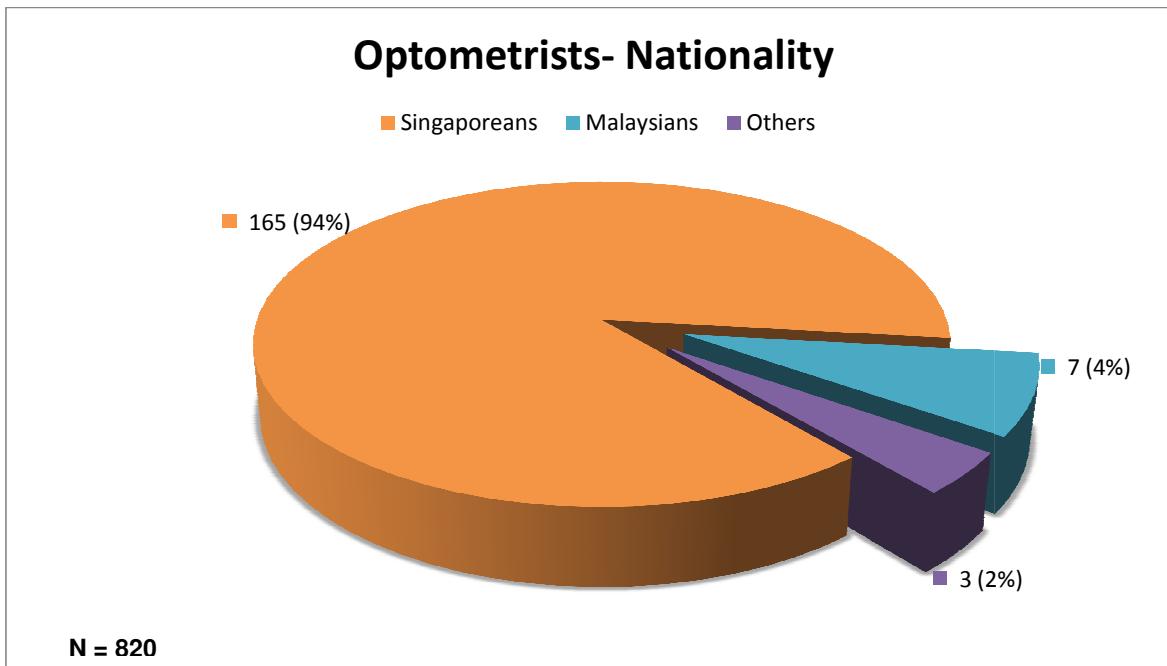
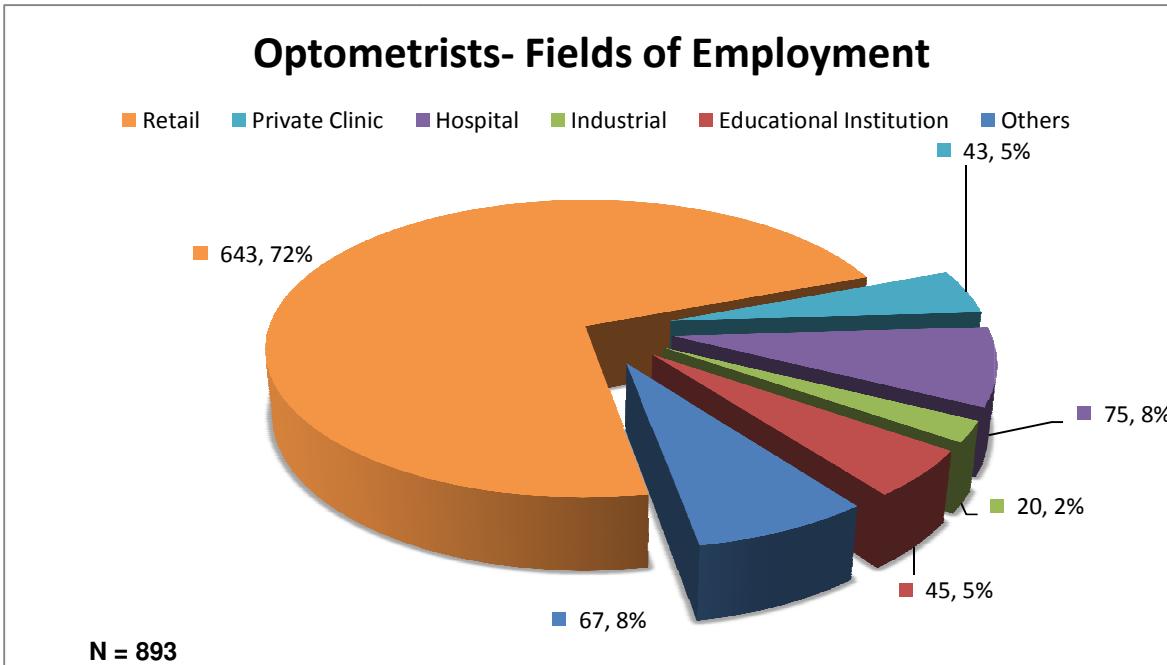


Chart 1.4- Optometrists By Fields Of Employment



2. Profiles of Opticians (Refraction & Dispensing) – 2012

Chart 2.1- Opticians (R+D) By Registration Types

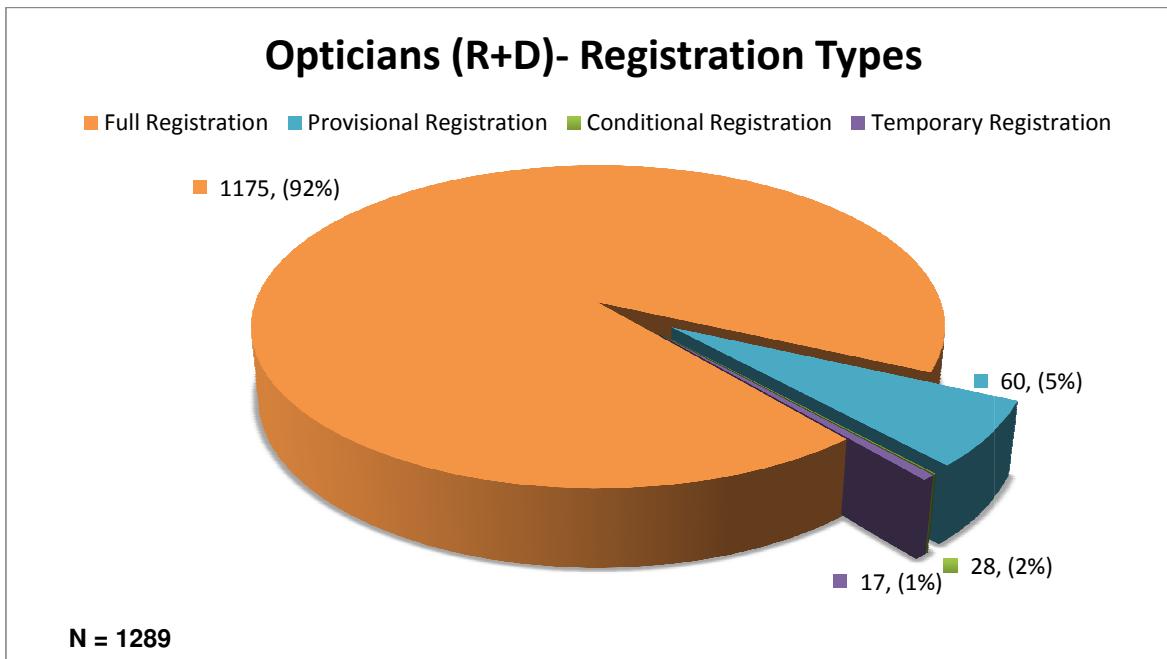


Chart 2.2- Opticians (R+D) By Age Group

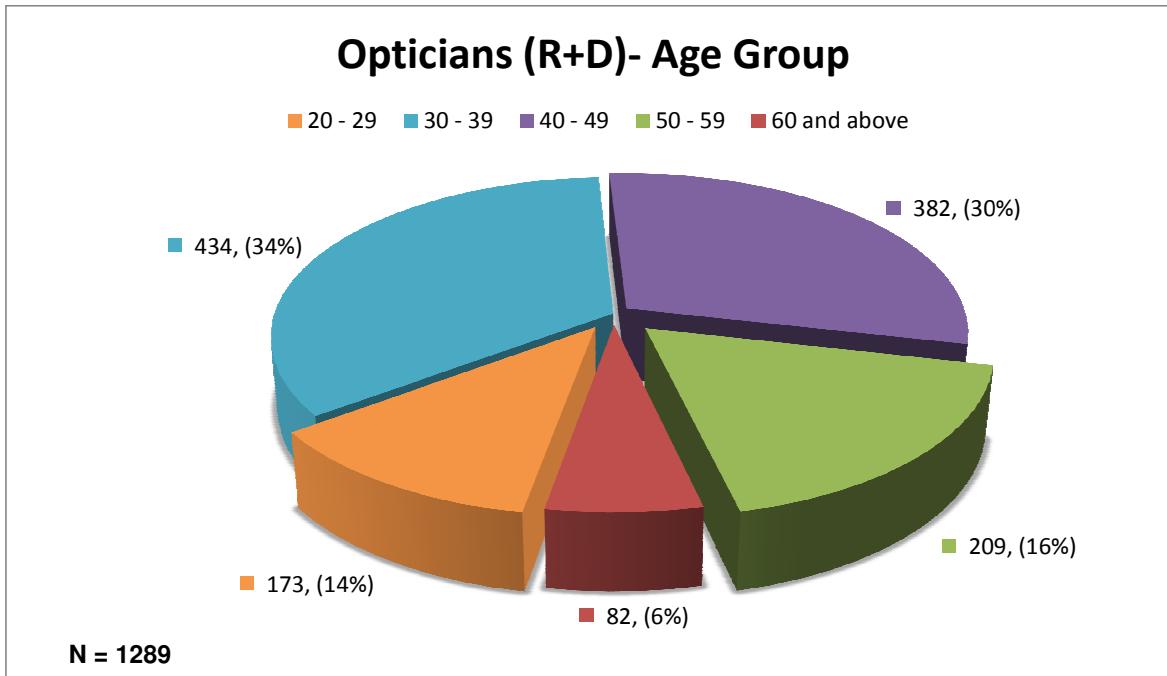


Chart 2.3- Opticians (R+D) By Nationality

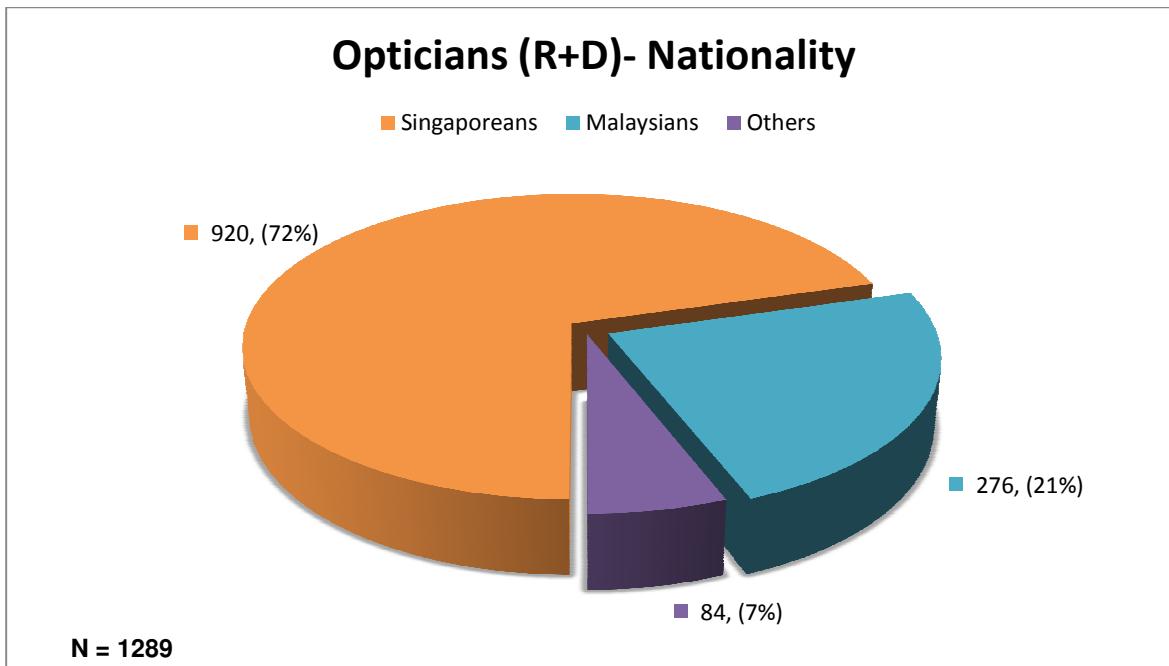
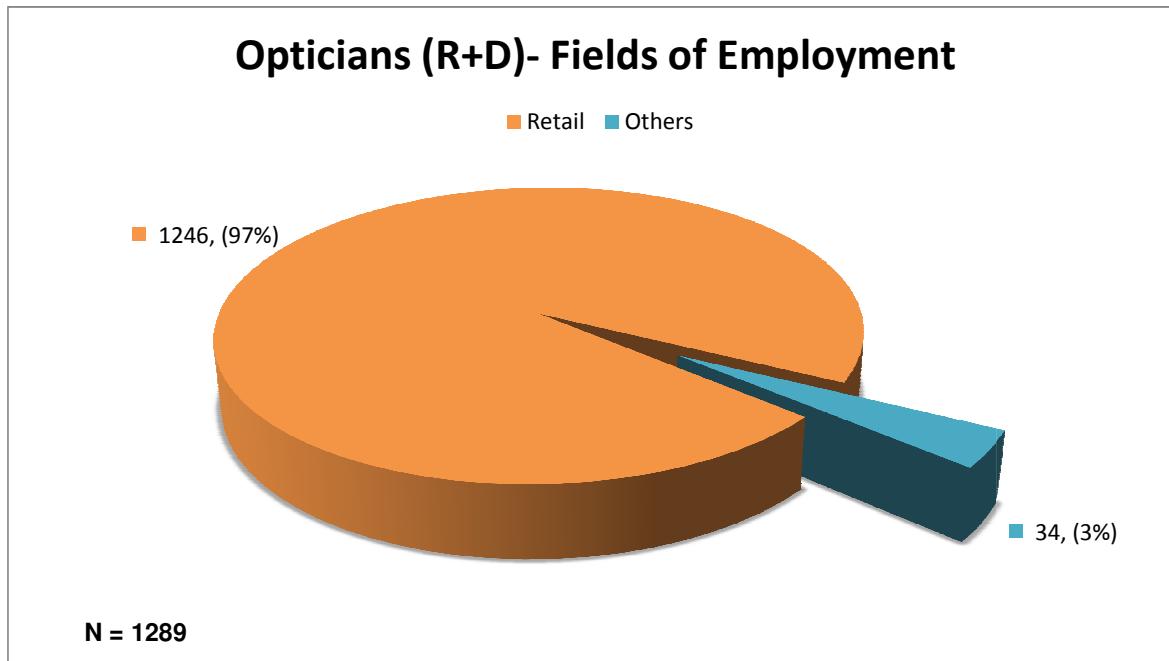


Chart 2.4- Opticians By Fields Of Employment



3. Profiles of Opticians (Dispensing) 2012

Chart 3.1- Opticians (D) By Registration Type

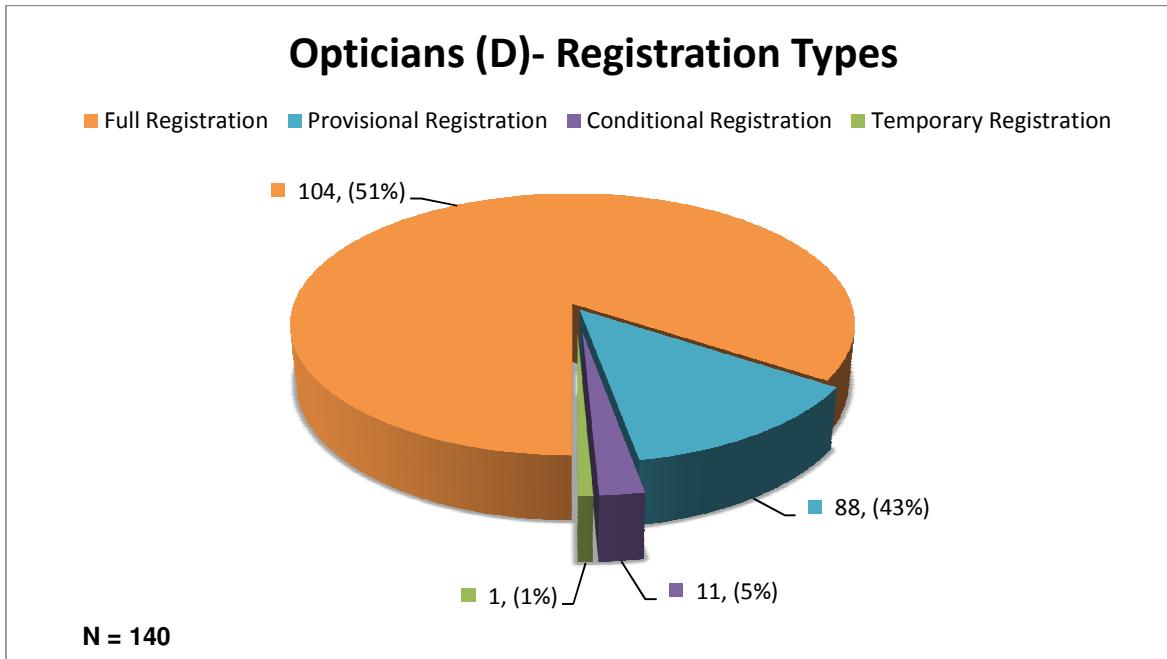


Chart 3.2- Opticians (D) By Age Group

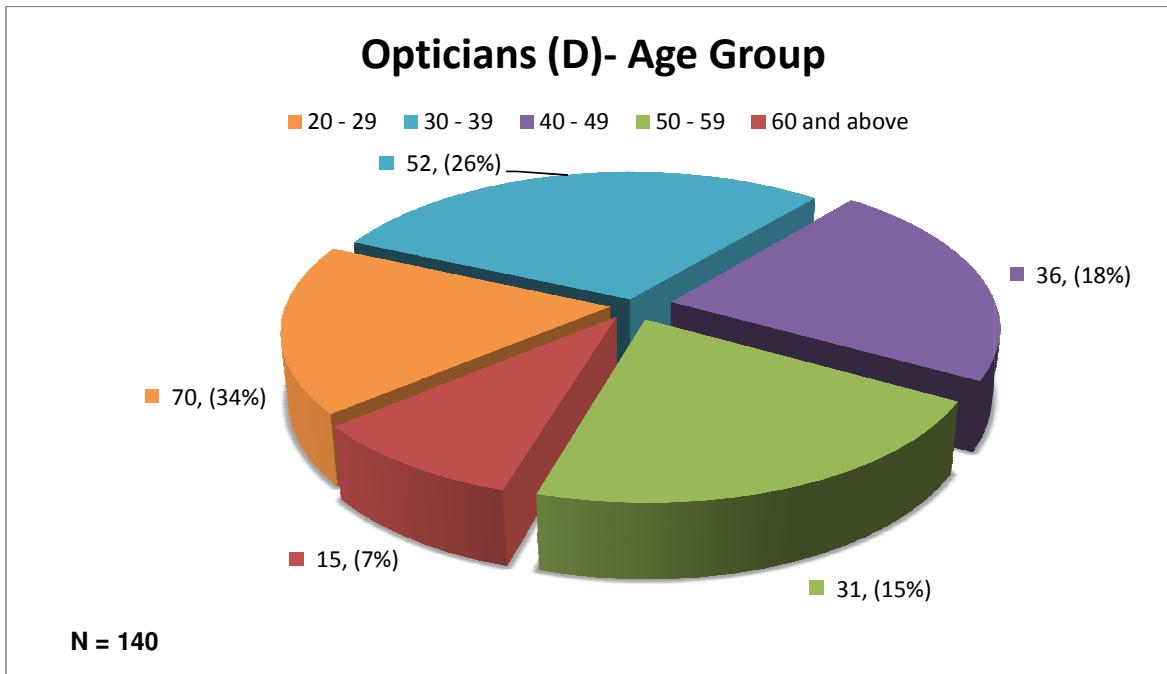


Chart 3.3- Opticians (D) By Nationality

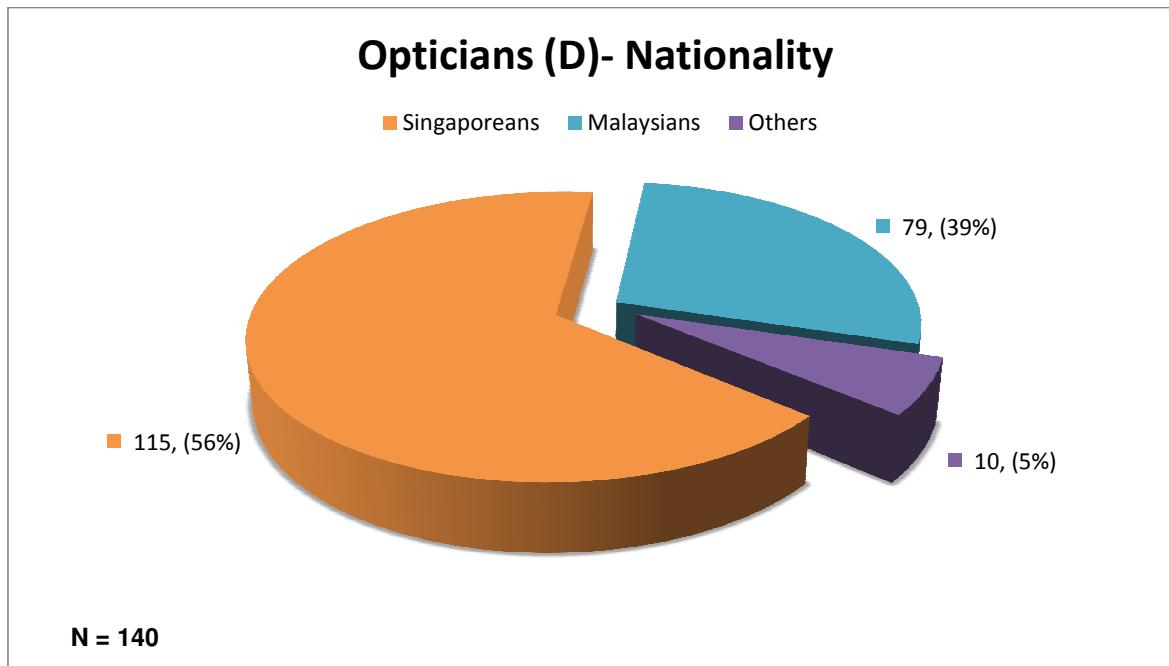
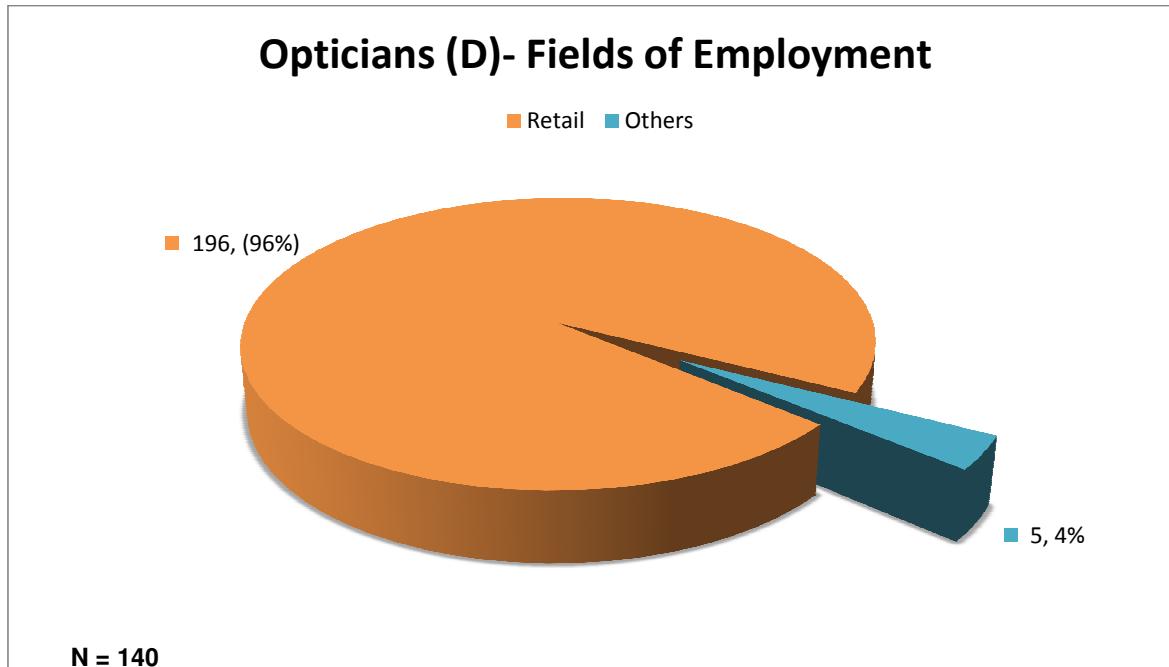


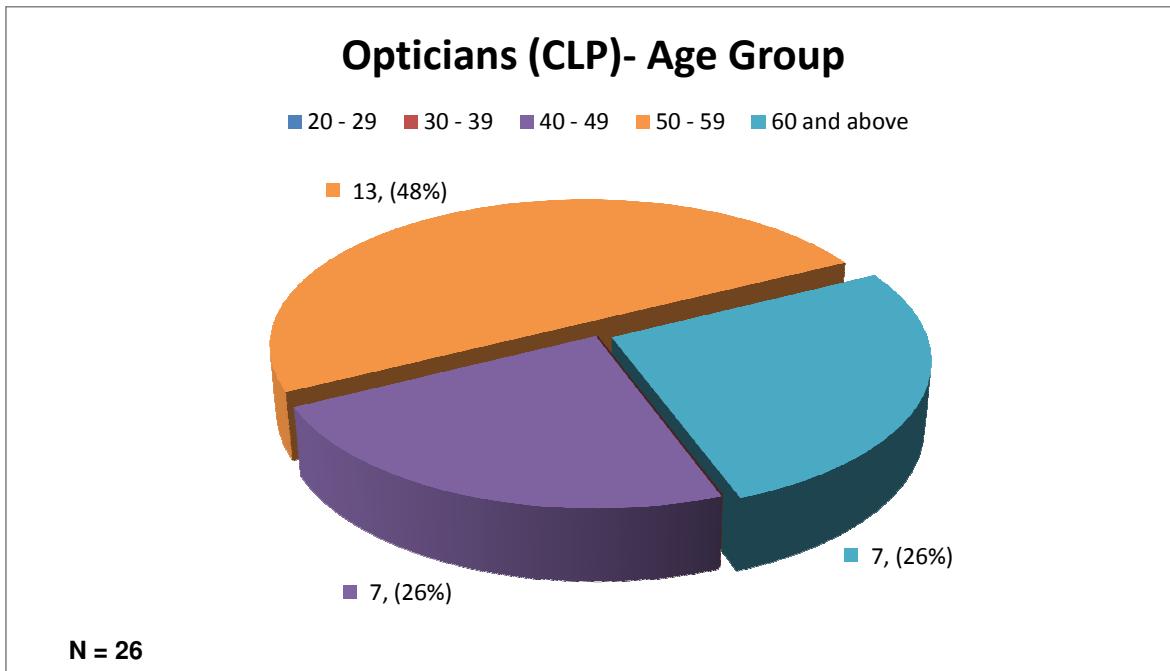
Chart 3.4- Opticians (D) By Fields Of Employment



4. Profiles of Opticians (Contact Lens Practitioner) 2012

There are a total of 26 opticians (CLP) and all are fully registered. All opticians (CLP) are Singaporeans and work in the retail sector.

Chart 4.1- Opticians (CLP) By Age Group



APPENDIX II (A)

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR OPTOMETRISTS

The Optometrists and Opticians Board (OOB) is the regulatory body for all optometrists and opticians in Singapore. In order to meet its objectives in regulating these professions, the Board has established and commissioned the Practice Ethics and Conduct Committee to develop this Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) for optometrists.

Patients and the public must be able to trust optometrists with their visual and ocular well being. To justify this trust, optometrists have to maintain a good standard of care, conduct and behaviour. Optometrists are expected to uphold the principles dictated by this Code. Adherence to this Code will also enable public trust and confidence in the profession.

The Code of Professional Conduct constitutes a yardstick for conduct, behaviour and professional ethics for Optometrists. It can be referenced should ethical issues be raised.

It is the view of the Board that disregard or failure to meet the standards of the code can potentially harm patients or bring disrepute to the optometric profession. Breaches of any article in this Code could lead to optometrists being asked to explain their actions and face disciplinary proceedings for professional misconduct.

This Code can be periodically updated to cover areas that were not previously dealt with, including issues arising from advances in optometry, and statutory or regulatory requirements.

- a) An optometrist must conduct himself or herself in his or her professional duties in accordance with the Optometrists and Opticians Act 2007 and Regulations and in accordance with this Code. The Code does not over-ride obligations that may be imposed on the practice of optometry by the Optometrists and Opticians Act and Regulations and any other Act or Regulation relating to the practice of optometry.
- b) An optometrist must maintain his or her knowledge and practise at a competent level and participate in continuing professional education activities.
- c) An optometrist must only perform or participate in those procedures that are within his or her competence and for which he or she is appropriately qualified, and refer those patients whose needs or requests are outside his or her competence, and where necessary follow up the referral.
- d) An optometrist must ensure privacy and confidentiality for his or her patients and for their ophthalmic records unless disclosure is necessary in the course of referral to a colleague in his or another healthcare profession or he/she is required to by the Board or the Law. Information contained in any patient's ophthalmic record should be made available to that patient if requested.
- e) An optometrist must not exploit his or her professional relationship with a patient or any other person in the conduct of his or her practice sexually, emotionally or financially or otherwise in any way.
- f) An optometrist should take reasonable steps to ensure his or her patients understand at the commencement of any test, procedure or treatment the risks, complications, possible reactions, nature, purpose, cost of and alternatives to the procedure or treatment.
- g) An optometrist must treat patients without prejudice of race, religion, creed, social standing, disability or financial status.

- h) An optometrist must respect the wish of a patient for a second opinion and, if requested, help the patient obtain the appropriate second opinion.
- i) If an optometrist has reason to believe that a colleague is behaving in an unprofessional manner, or that his standard of practice falls substantially below acceptable standards, he should report the conduct to the Optometrists and Opticians Board.
- j) An optometrist must not attend to a patient whilst his ability to do so is impaired by the influence of alcohol, drugs or physical or mental illness.
- k) An optometrist must maintain professionalism in informing the public about his or her services, ensuring that information projected is factual and does not self aggrandise. An optometrist shall not advertise his or her services in a way that is not consistent with the Optometrists and Opticians (Practice, Conduct, Ethics and Publicity) Regulations or any guidelines promulgated by the Board relating to publicity.

APPENDIX II (B)

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR OPTICIANS

The Optometrists and Opticians Board (OOB) is the regulatory body for all optometrists and opticians in Singapore. In order to meet its objectives in regulating these professions, the Board has established and commissioned the Practice Ethics and Conduct Committee to develop this Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) for opticians.

Patients and the public must be able to trust opticians implicitly with their visual and ocular well being. To justify this trust, opticians have to maintain a good standard of care, conduct and behaviour. Opticians are expected to uphold the principles dictated by their Code. Adherence to a Code of Professional Conduct will enable public trust and confidence in the profession.

The Code of Professional Conduct constitutes a yardstick for conduct, behaviour professional ethics. It can be referenced should ethical issues be raised.

The Board's view is that disregard or failure to meet an agreed code of standards amounting to professional misconduct can potentially harm patients or cause disrepute to the opticianry profession. Professional misconduct may be judged through disciplinary proceedings.

This Code can be periodically updated to cover areas that were not previously dealt with, including issues arising from advances in opticianry, and statutory or regulatory requirements.

- a) An optician must conduct himself or herself in his or her professional duties in accordance with the Optometrists and Opticians Act 2007 and Regulations and in accordance with this Code. This Code does not over-ride obligations imposed in the practice of opticianry by the Optometrists and Opticians Act and Regulations and any other Act or Regulation relating to the practice of opticianry.
- b) An optician must maintain his or her knowledge and practise at a competent level and participate in continuing professional education activities.
- c) An optician must only perform or participate in those procedures that are within his or her level of competency and for which he or she is appropriately qualified, and refer those patients whose conditions are outside his or her level of competence.
- d) An optician must ensure privacy and confidentiality for his or her patients and their ophthalmic records unless disclosure is necessary in the course of referral to another profession or is required by the Board or the law. Information contained in any patient's ophthalmic record should be made available to that patient if requested.
- e) An optician must not exploit his or her professional relationship with a patient or any other person in the conduct of his or her practice sexually, emotionally, financially or otherwise in any way.
- f) An optician should take reasonable steps to ensure his or her patients understand any procedure or prescription, risks and complications if any as well as the costs to the patient.
- g) An optician must manage his patients without bias or regard for race, religion, creed, social standing, disability or financial status.
- h) An optician must respect the wish of a patient for a second opinion and, if requested, help the patient obtain an appropriate second opinion.

- i) If an optician has reason to believe that a colleague is behaving in an unprofessional manner, or that his standard of practice falls substantially below acceptable standards, he should report the conduct to the Optometrists and Opticians Board.
- j) An optician must not attend to a patient when his ability to do so is impaired by the influence of alcohol, drugs, physical or mental illness.
- k) An optician must maintain professionalism in informing the public about his or her services, ensuring that information projected is purely factual and devoid of any attempt at self aggrandisement. An optician shall not advertise his or her services in a way that is not consistent with the Optometrists and Opticians (Practice, Conduct, Ethics and Publicity) Regulations or any guidelines promulgated by the Board relating to publicity.

APPENDIX III

Schedule of Fees

Application Fee	\$50
Registration Fee	\$200
Practising Certificate Renewal Fees (2 years):	
- Optometrists	\$300
- Opticians (CLP)	\$280
- Opticians (Refraction & Dispensing)	\$280
- Opticians (Dispensing)	\$200
Late application fee for the renewal of a practising certificate:	
where the application is made less than 30 days before the expiry of the practicing certificate	\$50
where the application is made after the expiry of the practising certificate	\$100
Registration of any additional qualification	\$50
Restoration Fee	\$300
Certified True Copy of Certificate Fee	\$50
Certificate of Good Standing Fee	\$60