

(g) (1) ~~{Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, a} A therapeutically certified optometrist may {not} order laboratory tests for a patient THAT ARE NECESSARY TO ADHERE TO THE STANDARDS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF TOPICAL PHARMACEUTICAL AGENTS PRESCRIBED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SECTION.~~

(2) A therapeutically certified optometrist may order a conjunctival culture.

(h) A therapeutically certified optometrist may not provide any therapeutic treatment listed in this section for a child under the age of 1 year.

(i) Unless the standard of care requires an earlier referral, if a therapeutically certified optometrist diagnoses a corneal ulcer or infiltrate, and the patient does not have the expected response within 48 hours, the optometrist immediately shall refer the patient to an ophthalmologist.

(j) A therapeutically certified optometrist shall be held to the same standard of care as an ophthalmologist who is licensed under Title 14 of this article and who is providing similar services.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, on or before October 1, 2005, the State Board of Examiners in Optometry shall approve at least one ~~continuing education~~ course for a therapeutically certified optometrist administered by the Maryland Optometric Association in conjunction with the Maryland Eye Surgeons and Physicians ~~on the removal of superficial foreign bodies from the human eye, adnexa, or lacrimal system~~ that satisfies the requirements of § 11-404.1(b)(1)(iv) of the Health Occupations Article as enacted by this Act and qualifies as a continuing education course.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the State Board of Examiners in Optometry shall grant a waiver of the certification requirements of § ~~11-404.1~~ 11-404.1(b)(1)(iv) of the Health Occupations Article to any individual who is currently a therapeutically certified optometrist until July 1, 2006.

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That ~~the State Board of Examiners in Optometry shall certify a licensed optometrist as a therapeutically certified optometrist prior to the license renewal date if the optometrist completes the requirements of § 11-404.1 of the Health Occupations Article, as enacted by this Act, prior to the license renewal date, by November 30, 2005, the State Board of Examiners in Optometry, in consultation with and subject to the approval of the State Board of Physicians, shall adopt regulations establishing a collaborative practice protocol for the administration and prescription of topical steroids by therapeutically certified optometrists under § 11-404.2 of the Health Occupations Article as enacted by this Act.~~

SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the State Board of Examiners in Optometry and the State Board of Physicians shall each report, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Health and Government Operations Committee by June 1, 2008, on issues related to the practice