

ECOO MEMBER ARTICLE



Der Verband für Optometrie und Optik
L'association d'optométrie et d'optique



Schweizerischer Berufsverband
für Augenoptik und Optometrie
Société Suisse pour
l'Optique et l'Optométrie

SWITZERLAND: MYOPIA MANAGEMENT IN STATE- REGULATED BASIC HEALTH INSURANCE

Switzerland is one of the first countries to include myopia management in state-regulated basic health insurance: With effect from 1 July 2024, patients up to the age of 21 are entitled to receive annual contributions from their basic health insurance.

This benefit is available to patients who, without this intervention, would develop a higher risk of later retinal problems: this is defined as those at risk of becoming highly myopic or already being highly myopic and the presence of a progression of at least 0.50 dioptres per year. High myopia is defined as < -5.00 dioptres or a corresponding

above-average axial eye length according to current growth charts.

One-off ophthalmologist prescription

To trigger the insurance benefit, a one-off ophthalmological prescription is required for progressive myopia, which must also state the current eye length, the degree of myopia and evidence of progression. The subsequent myopia management, including determining the type of treatment (contact lenses or spectacle lenses with peripheral defocus), checking the effectiveness of the products and adjusting the strategy if necessary, can then be carried out independently by optometrists. This regulation is based on the solution for visual-therapeutic care for irregular astigmatism, where the ophthalmologist writes a prescription and optometrists then

adjust the most appropriate products for the patient.

Practicality and cost-effectiveness were convincing

The fact that the catalogue of available benefits for patients has been extended in times of rising healthcare costs is remarkable. The case for the advantages of myopia management has been made convincingly - not least thanks to the great efforts of a project group of the professional associations SBAO and OPTIKSCHWEIZ, which proved the usefulness and cost-effectiveness of this measure with studies based on detailed specifications. The winners are those affected, who no longer have to weigh up whether they can afford sensible myopia management in order to minimise retinal risks later on.

Clarification of outstanding procedural issues

The Swiss Federal Office of Public Health is a huge authority with complex decision-making processes –

which often feels like an impenetrable black box for outsiders. The announcement that the revised insurance position on visual aids would take effect on 1 July 2024 – an announcement made less than two weeks in advance - came as a surprise to everyone involved. In view of the issue of healthcare costs, it had been anticipated that myopia management would not be included.

The encouragingly positive decision still leaves a number of questions regarding implementation. Many of these concern the interaction between ophthalmology and optometry, as well as insurance, and are currently still undergoing interdisciplinary clarification.

But despite these final issues this is still good news and an important step forward.

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