Licensing – Use of Laser Apparatus for Ophthalmology

The Radiation Safety Act 1999 requires all persons who use radiation apparatus to hold an appropriate licence issued by the Chief Executive, Queensland Health. These use licences may only be issued to persons who have appropriate skills and knowledge of the principles and practices of radiation protection, as well as expertise in the use of the radiation apparatus. Under the Act, laser apparatus is considered to be radiation apparatus.

This information sheet outlines the licensing requirements for persons who wish to use laser apparatus for ophthalmology.

What is a laser apparatus?

Laser apparatus is:

(a) a laser that could reasonably be used to carry out a diagnostic, therapeutic or cosmetic procedure involving the irradiation of a person

(b) an apparatus that, if assembled or repaired, and when energised, is capable of emitting an amount of non-ionising radiation higher than the accessible emission limit for a class 3B laser for the relevant period, stated in, and measured in accordance with, the laser standard AS2211 (ie. a class 4 laser).

When is a licence required?

All persons who use laser apparatus must hold an appropriate use licence issued under the Radiation Safety Act 1999.

Knowledge and practical competencies

The practice of ophthalmology does not just involve the use of laser apparatus, it also requires sound clinical management of the patient, ie. thorough understanding of biology, physiology, pathology, anatomy, types of lesions, wound healing, scar management and pain management. Persons seeking a laser use apparatus licence for ophthalmology are therefore required to demonstrate an appropriate level of clinical knowledge in addition to knowledge of laser safety and competency in the use of the laser apparatus.

Typically, different types of laser apparatus are used by ophthalmologists in the course of their ophthalmological procedures. It is recognised that a high degree of skill and knowledge in the use of the laser apparatus including sound knowledge of laser safety is required to perform surgical procedures on the eye.

At present, Fellows of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) are considered to have sufficient knowledge and skills in the use of the laser apparatus for ophthalmological purposes and laser safety. Fellows of the RANZCO are therefore considered to be proficient in the use of laser apparatus.
Eligibility for a licence

Applicants will be considered eligible for a licence to use laser apparatus for ophthalmology if, in addition to completing the application form and providing the appropriate licence fee, they meet the requirements of one of the following alternatives:

Alternative One

Applicants must:

- provide evidence that they have been admitted as a fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
- provide evidence of their current registration with the Medical Board of Queensland listing ophthalmology as a specialty.

Alternative Two

Applicants must:

- provide evidence of their current registration with the Medical Board of Queensland listing ophthalmology as a specialty
- provide evidence that they have satisfactorily completed a laser safety course, specifically approved by the Director, Radiation Health, within three years of the application being submitted
- be able to demonstrate to the Chief Executive, Queensland Health that they have sufficient experience in the use of the laser apparatus for ophthalmological purposes. This may be assisted by providing verification of use from a colleague or a statement detailing the applicant’s work history relevant to the use of laser apparatus.

Approved laser safety courses

A list of approved laser safety courses is available on request from Radiation Health.

Persons who have completed a course which has not been approved should submit full details of the course for consideration by Radiation Health.

Procedure for application

An application for a licence to use laser apparatus must be made to the Chief Executive, Queensland Health through the licensing officer, Radiation Health. Application forms are available from Radiation Health by phoning (07) 3406 8000. Licences granted remain current for the term specified on the licence and are subject to any conditions in the legislation and any additional conditions attached to the licence. Applications for renewal of licences must be made prior to the expiry of the current licence.

Enquiries

For further information, please contact an officer at Radiation Health on (07) 3406 8000 or, alternatively, via email at radiation_health@health.qld.gov.au.