

## **Remember: All Contact Lenses, Even Plano, Require a Prescription!**

Over the past several months, the AOA's Contact Lens and Cornea Section (CLCS) has led AOA's efforts to stop retailers who are illegally selling decorative contact lenses and putting the public at risk. As part of this public health initiative, the CLCS would like to remind eye care professionals of the importance of educating patients regarding the need for a comprehensive eye exam and follow-up, even for plano contact lenses. According to the AOA's 2013 American Eye-Q® consumer survey, 17 percent of Americans have worn decorative contact lenses that don't provide vision correction. Of those individuals, 24 percent purchased them without a prescription from a source other than an eye doctor. Plano decorative contact lenses (also known as beauty enhancing, theatrical, color or cosmetic lenses) may be marketed and distributed directly to consumers through illegal sources such as online or at flea markets, beauty salons, convenience stores and even national retailers. This is a significant concern of the CLCS, the AOA, and its members.

It is critical that all consumers are aware that the sale of any contact lenses without prescription is prohibited in the United States under the federal law. The federal Fairness to Contact Lens Consumers Act (FCLCA) specifically indicates that "Any person that engages in the manufacture, processing, assembly, sale, offering for sale, or distribution of contact lenses **may not represent**, by advertisement, sales presentation, or other-wise, that contact lenses may be obtained without a prescription."<sup>1</sup>

AOA's Chairman of the Contact Lens and Cornea Section, Thomas Quinn, OD, MS, FAAO notes, "A significant percent of the public believes that contact lenses without power do not require a prescription. Although contact lenses are a very safe device to wear when under the supervision of an eye care professional, complications can arise. Why would the risk be lower simply because the power in the contact lens is plano? There's a reason all contact lenses, even plano lenses, are classified as medical devices by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. They require a valid prescription whether they correct vision or are plano contact lenses worn for special occasions such as proms or weddings. Plano decorative contact lenses, like any other contact lens, used improperly can cause significant damage including corneal swelling, eye infection, and corneal abrasion due to poor lens fit. These issues can result in a reduction of visual acuity, diminished contrast sensitivity, or reduced peripheral vision and other eye and vision impairments. These issues have little to do with the contact lens power."

The AOA urges members to educate their patients regarding the need for contact lens safety. A consumer-oriented website focused on the issue is available at [www.contactlenssafety.org](http://www.contactlenssafety.org) Additionally, if you are aware of an illegal contact lens retailer or if you know of an individual who has been harmed by illegal contact lens sales, please report the incident to the appropriate federal agency. For information on how to report illegal contact lens sales visit: [www.aoa.org/contactlenses](http://www.aoa.org/contactlenses)

For AOA's internal records, or simply for assistance getting your message to the right people, please report all incidents to Kara Webb at [kcwebb@aoa.org](mailto:kcwebb@aoa.org)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-108publ164/html/PLAW-108publ164.htm>

“We need to stop the illegal sale of decorative contact lenses,” says Dr. Quinn. “It’s been widely abused for too long. The Contact Lens and Cornea Section is initiating new, proactive measures to identify illegal sellers in order to protect the public. But we can’t do it alone. We need your help. Talk to your patients about plano decorative lenses, report abusers, and keep AOA in the loop.”