

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

### **Color Codes for Topical Ocular Medications**

**Policy:**

The American Academy of Ophthalmology endorses the uniform use of a color-coding system for the caps and labels of topical ocular medications.

**Background:**

The Academy's policy on color coding of eyedrop drug caps was prompted by reports to the Academy and the National Registry of Drug-Induced Ocular Side Effects of serious adverse events resulting from patient difficulty in distinguishing between various ocular medications. With input from the pharmaceutical industry and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Academy's Committee on Drugs developed a uniform color-coding system. Specific pantone colors were assigned to defined classes of ocular drugs according to the nature of the disease being treated, the product's side-effect profile, and the risk of serious sequelae if a product is inadvertently switched with another.

To date, voluntary cooperation between the pharmaceutical industry, the FDA, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology has been very effective in meeting the interest of patient safety.

**Evaluation:**

The objective of the uniform color-coding system for topical ocular medications is to help patients distinguish between various medications, thereby minimizing the risk of patients selecting the incorrect one. Major medical problems thus may be averted.

Representatives of the pharmaceutical industry have been involved in developing this color-coding system and have been largely supportive of the color-coding policy. Although it is impossible to achieve one-hundred-percent consensus among industry representatives when choosing from limited colors, aspects of patient safety, common prescribing patterns, and available color options have all been taken into consideration in making these recommendations.

**Recommendation:**

The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends to the FDA and the pharmaceutical industry that a uniform color-coding system for the caps and labels of all topical ocular medications be established. No other topical medications should carry the same color.

The proper color codes are as follows:

<b>Class</b>	<b>Color</b>	<b>Pantone Number</b>
Anti-infectives	Tan	467
Anti-inflammatories/steroids	Pink	197
Mydriatics and cycloplegics	Red	1797
Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories	Gray	4
Miotics	Dark Green	348
Beta-blockers	Yellow	Yellow C
Beta-blocker combinations	Dark Blue	281
Adrenergic agonists	Purple	2583

Carbonic anhydrase inhibitors	Orange	1585
Prostaglandin analogues	Turquoise	326

As new classes of drugs are developed, it may be necessary in future policy statements to assign new colors to additional classes of drug products.

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