

Protect physician-led care

Optometrists lack the comprehensive medical knowledge and experience necessary to safely perform surgical procedures on patients. The safe performance of surgical procedures, whether performed using a scalpel or laser, depends on the education and years of clinical training by physicians. The best way to support high-quality care is to keep physicians as the leader of the health care team.

PHYSICIANS ARE TRAINED TO LEAD

Ophthalmologists (MD, DO)

4 years
+ 1-year internship

3–5 years

12,000–16,000 hours

 Postgraduate education

 Residency

 Training

Optometrists (OD)

4 years

None required

 1-year clinical rotations

OPTOMETRISTS ARE NOT PROPERLY TRAINED TO PERFORM EYE SURGERY

Ophthalmologist education and training is...

Comprehensive: Study all aspects of the human condition—in the classroom, laboratory and through direct patient care, including more than 1,350 hours of biological, chemical, pharmacological and behavioral coursework.

Thorough and hands on:

- During medical school, ophthalmologists gain direct experience caring for patients across specialties and spectrum of diseases, completing two years of clinical patient care rotations across a range of fields, including family and internal medicine, obstetrics, gynecology, pediatrics and psychiatry.
- These skills are expanded and refined in residency, during which ophthalmology residents fine-tune their surgical acumen, including assisting and eventually performing thousands of surgical procedures under direct supervision as part of their training.

Rigorous and standardized:

- Minimum requirement of 3,000 ophthalmology outpatient visits during residency.
- Nine months of surgical or medical care in areas outside of ophthalmology.
- Extensive training in pre-operative, intra-operative and post-operative ophthalmic surgical care.
- Demonstrated knowledge of and competence in medical, diagnostic, and surgical ophthalmic care, including managing complications associated with anesthesia use.

With regards to surgical training, optometrist education is ...

Insubstantial: Optometrist education includes only 572.5 hours of basic sciences coursework and focuses on primary eye care.

Limited:

- No substantive clinical training managing diseases affecting the entire body.
- Highly limited exposure to standard surgical procedure, aseptic surgical technique, or medical response to adverse events. Only 2 of the nation's 24 optometry schools are in states that allow optometrists to perform laser surgery.

Insufficient:

- No appropriate clinical training in surgery or surgical care of patients.
- Certification course in eye surgery is typically only 32 hours and does not require operating on live patients. The course includes the following:
 - 16 hours of training in laser surgery
 - 16 hours of training in incisional and injection procedures

Patient health and safety is threatened when optometrists are permitted to perform services that are not commensurate with their education or training.

79% of voters are opposed to optometrists performing eye surgery

189% increase in repeat laser trabeculoplasty (a type of glaucoma surgery) when initial surgery is performed by an optometrist rather than an ophthalmologist

MYTH

Expanding optometrists' scope of practice will improve access to care.

FACT

Access to care has not substantially improved in states that allow optometrists to perform surgery.