

# 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 trabeculectomy (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.