

An Ophthalmologist's Career

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Introduction

For my career paper I chose to research the profession of optometry and take a further look into the career of an ophthalmologist. An ophthalmologist is “an eye care specialist that unlike optometrists and opticians is considered a doctor medicine (MD) or doctors of osteopathy that have specific training and experience in diagnosing and treating eye and vision conditions.” (Cleveland Clinic 2022.) Ophthalmologists are qualified to deliver total eye care such as vision services, eye examinations, medical and surgical eye care, and diagnosis and treatment of disease and visual complications. Ophthalmologists are ambulatory setting doctors that deal with the sense of vision which was learned about in week six of class.

Ophthalmologists specialize in eye care and are the only healthcare practitioners that receive training to diagnose and treat all conditions that affect a person’s eyes and vision. Vision is a key sense that we all need, and it can also be one of the most complicated things to treat when there is an issue. Ophthalmology has many subspecialists that are known as: “the cornea, the retina or uveitis, glaucoma, pediatric ophthalmology, plastic and reconstructive surgery or oculoplastic, neuro- ophthalmology, and ocular oncology.” (Medical News Today 2022) Ophthalmologists are secondary and tertiary health care providers which in the textbook is defined as “care that is arranged through referral or consultation after a preliminary evaluation by a primary care provider that includes most surgical procedures and common diagnostic and treatment interventions of such specialists.” (Goldstein, B.Z. 2021)

Education and License

To pursue a career in ophthalmology, students need to complete many different levels of education. An ophthalmologist must complete four years of pre-medical undergraduate education

and then attend four years of medical school. After medical school students must then complete one year of an internship and then complete three more years of specialized medical and surgical training in eye care. After all this education ophthalmologists must then get licensed by a state regulatory board to diagnose, treat, and manage conditions that affect the eyes and visual systems.

In the pre-medical undergraduate level of education students will complete coursework in classes referring to biology, chemistry, mathematics, as well as psychology, anatomy all of which will be required as prerequisites for consideration of medical school. Before a student can be accepted into optometry medical school, they must first complete the OAT test which is a “comprehensive exam that enables optometry education programs to assess the knowledge and preparedness of program applicants.” (OAT, ADA 2022) This test is six parts and is built around important optometry skills. The test is reported for each section and ranges from 200-400 it has been found that most optometry schools in the country accept students who have a relative score of 320 and higher on the OAT test.

Ophthalmologists need to obtain their physician’s license with their state medical licensing board. Many states will require a specialty license in ophthalmology which is licensed mostly through the American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) The ABO requires that “ophthalmologists who are certified later than 1992 must renew their license every 10 years. This requires evidence for one’s professional standing, practice performance, review patient records, commitment to lifelong learning and self-assessment, and cognitive expertise.”

Medical school required to become an ophthalmologist cost about \$120,000 - \$130,000 at a public college and more than \$200,000 at a private college for the required four years. On top of this is costs about \$40,000 per year to acquire the undergraduate requirements to become an ophthalmologist. This however does vary considering some schools cost more or less than others

and there are also costs that can be associated with the testing and licensing that is required for the profession.

Typical Day

Ophthalmologists usually have packed workdays that are full of responsibilities. “A typical day for an ophthalmologist includes performing comprehensive exams of the eyes to determine the nature or extent of ocular disorders.” (Owl Guru 2015) Ophthalmologists also diagnose or treat disorders and diseases of the eye that include the cornea, sclera, conjunctiva, and eyelids. They also document and evaluate patient medical histories, perform, order, and interpret the results of diagnostic or clinical tests, and develop treatment plans based on the patient’s histories and goals, the severity of the disorder and the treatment risks and benefits. Some tasks that are usually completed on a weekly or monthly basis are “performing ophthalmic surgeries with cataracts, glaucoma, refractive, corneal, vitreoretinal, eye muscle, and oculoplastic surgeries, providing or direct the patient to postoperative care, perform laser surgeries to alter, remove, reshape, or replace ocular tissue, collaborate with multiple disciplinary teams of health professionals to provide optimal patient care, refer patients for more specialized treatments when conditions exceed the experience, expertise, or scope of practice of practitioner.” (Owl Guru 2015)

The typical day as well as monthly and weekly tasks varies by the provider and if they are subspecialized or not. Considering some may be strictly surgery of the cataracts or only laser surgery, but this is a basic description of some things that are typically seen in the average ophthalmologist’s day.

The ophthalmology career requires special equipment to be used that is necessary. These instruments are ophthalmoscope, retinoscope, phoropter, eye charts. Ophthalmologists are trained to use this equipment in their internships as well as part of their medical school.

Population Served

Ophthalmologists care for people of all ages considering vision is something that always changes and something that most people need care for. Some ophthalmologists specialize in strictly adults while other specialize in pediatric care which deals more with child visual diseases and disorders.

Working Conditions

Majority of ophthalmologists work in a private practice with affiliations to hospitals. This allows them to make the most amount of profit without as many restrictions while also allowing hospital access for surgeries. This job can be referred to as stressful for the most part due to the pressure that an ophthalmologist can be put under when they are performing a surgery. They also can be exposed to occupational health hazards that are known as ergonomic-ophthalmologic that is caused by the laser and intense light used when performing eye surgeries, psychosocial diseases that come with the intense pressure and workload, ergonomic mechanical that is caused by operating microscopes with slit lamp, and indirect ophthalmoscopes. (EyeWiki 2020)

Reimbursement

Ophthalmologists that are experienced get paid an average of \$222,270 per year in West Virginia which and typically start out making about \$101,020 per year. Since most ophthalmologists are private practice care providers, they are typically self-paid. It has been discovered that those that are private practice are able to make more earning per year. These

providers earn their earning from charging service fees they also get profit from a productivity measurement.

Professional Organizations

There are various professional organizations that are based in the field of ophthalmology. The main organizations are the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), the American Association of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus (AAPOS), and the American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO). All these organizations are referred to as national organizations. All these organizations keep check on licensing of ophthalmologists as well as observe policy changes. The International Council of Ophthalmology is an international organization that focuses on the enhancement of ophthalmic education, advance eye health, and empower societies and leaders.

Geographical Location

Ophthalmologists are concentrated all over the country in various practices and hospitals, you can find them at most secondary and tertiary hospitals. As far as geographical location goes you can find these professionals evenly distributed throughout the U.S.

Contribution to Health of Americans

Ophthalmologists contribute to the health of others by providing care to those with eye issues. They focus on making those with visual diseases and disorders by providing them with care and even surgeries to promote better quality of life.

Job Outlook

Ophthalmology is projected to see an increase in job outlook by 10 percent by 2028. This means that this profession specifically has seen an increase in need and opportunity, as well as the amount of those wanting to pursue the career.

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