



MANAGING GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the United States and worldwide. Glaucoma is an eye disease that damages the optic nerve and can result in blindness and vision loss. Early detection and treatment can protect your eyes against serious vision loss.

Part of every comprehensive eye exam includes measurement of eye pressure and an examination of the optic nerve. With the results of the exam, optometrists are able to make an initial assessment and can determine whether a patient has glaucoma.

An optometrist can determine the specific stage of the disease, estimate the risk for vision loss and blindness and decide whether to initiate treatment. He/She can prescribe oral medications in addition to the topical ophthalmic medication.

Optometrists may also perform laser procedures, depending on their training and state regulations.

Managing glaucoma requires specialized knowledge and skills. The level of involvement of each optometrist in treating this condition may differ based on their individual training and experience. Some optometrists have pursued supplementary training and certification specifically dedicated to managing glaucoma patients. Additionally, some optometrists work in collaboration with ophthalmologists in the care of glaucoma patients, enabling the sharing of expertise and the establishment of referral networks.

Training

Optometrists can receive specialized training to manage glaucoma through various courses, certifications, and fellowships. This training equips them with the knowledge and skills to diagnose, manage, and potentially treat glaucoma patients, often in collaboration with ophthalmologists.

Many optometry schools offer advanced courses and certificate programs in glaucoma. Optometrists can also pursue additional coursework and training in glaucoma specifically, such as instructive and clinical courses. Some states offer certification programs for optometrists who complete specific training requirements in glaucoma.

To gain a deeper understanding of disease management, pursuing an optometric residency after completing your education is highly recommended. There are numerous disease-based residencies offered in various practice settings, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs in VA hospitals, combined optometry/ophthalmology practices, and private practice optometry clinics. These residencies provide optometrists with the opportunity to gain valuable experience with complex cases, which in turn enhances their diagnostic abilities and knowledge of patient management.



Resources

- **Optometric Glaucoma Society (OGS)**

<https://optometricglaucomasociety.org/>

The OGS is an organization, composed of optometrists, ophthalmologists, and scientists, promotes excellence in glaucoma care through professional education, scientific investigation, and collaboration. The OGS aims to educate optometrists about glaucoma, advance knowledge through research, and disseminate information to healthcare providers and the public.

- **Optometric Glaucoma Foundation (OGF)**

<https://glaucomafoundation.org>

The OGF supports glaucoma education and research through grants, scholarships, and other initiatives. The Glaucoma Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of people with glaucoma. The Foundation works to encourage and support basic and applied research in glaucoma with a goal of preserving and restoring vision.



Why choose this path?

As an optometrist with a passion for ocular disease, I've found my passion to be in managing chronic and progressive conditions like glaucoma and dry eye disease. These are more than just eye issues—they're quality-of-life issues. Being able to provide long-term care, education, and innovative treatment options to patients is incredibly rewarding.

What drew me to this specialty was the opportunity to combine patient-centered care with advanced diagnostics and clinical problem-solving. And what has kept me inspired is the diversity of paths this career offers. From private practice to multidisciplinary clinics, and from research to industry, optometry allows you to explore beyond the exam lane.

For students thinking about a future in health care, optometry—offers a dynamic, meaningful, and flexible career.

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