

- Introduction

2019 grad from Southern College of Optometry in Memphis, TN  
Practiced three years in Missouri before moving to New England  
Have been practicing two years at Shippee Family Eye Care in St Johnsbury, VT

- Education

We (optometrists) are the primary medical eye care providers. We treat everything eye related. Optometry school is 4 years of only eyes (after completing undergrad). I am very confident in the training we had in school (lasers, lumps/bumps, injections, etc) This feels like a big expansion but this is something we learned to do. !! Passing this does not mean that every optometrist will be doing this, most will not to be honest. This is allowing the optometrists who are up to date on their education and feel confident in their abilities to do this.

- Cost savings:

Eliminates an extra “evaluation” appointment  
Patients have to miss work, travel, utilize RCT, etc when going to appointments → healthcare cost savings to community

- Access to care (specifically speaking for northeast kingdom for these)

We have an aging population in Vermont, far drive to other facilities (UVM, DHMC, etc)  
We have an ophthalmologist in our practice that does these procedures (the only one in our region!)  
There is a 4 month wait for laser procedures (that are included in this bill)  
There is also an 8 month wait for cataract surgery here...  
If you allow optometrists to take some of these procedures it will allow our surgeon to spend more time in the actual operating room.  
When patients have to wait this long to have these procedures done you are basically taking away their independence. They may not be able to see well enough to drive so have to utilize family or RCT. They may not be able to instill their glaucoma eye drops on their own and need help with that.  
Most importantly!! This will draw more healthcare professionals (optometrists) to the area when they can use their full scope of practice that they were trained on.  
This will attract quality care — the optometrists who want to get certified and practice these procedures are the ones who want to be at the top of their game.

We can either dig ourselves out of an access problem, or prevent it from worsening now

Thanks,

Julia Kitchens, O.D.