

Good morning-

As a former Chief Medical Officer at a Vermont hospital, one of my main responsibilities was overseeing quality and safety. I was also the leader who was accountable for outcomes, patient and family complaints, and addressing poor outcomes and complications. It is clear that more training and higher volume of experience is linked to improved patient safety and fewer complications.

While I appreciate that there is a push for Optometrists to do "minor" procedures to address both limited patient access and increasing cost of care, it is not the safest choice for our friends and neighbors. Optometrists do not have the same duration or nature of training nor do they have the same oversight and regulation as Ophthalmologists. I am concerned that our population already does not understand the difference between these professions and it risks creating a sense of equivalency when people are making comparisons. Additionally, these professionals are operating (mostly) independently, with little to no oversight of their process or outcomes.

I am very aware of the needs of our aging population in rural areas. Expansion of access to necessary eye care is important. Doing it in a way that does not increase risk is equally important.

Respectfully,  
Anna Benvenuto, MD  
Cornwall, VT