

What is Medical Optometry?

The phrase “get medical” is meant to encourage our colleagues at optometry offices to incorporate more medical eye care in their practices and support the updating of optometry practice acts to facilitate “full scope optometry” at general practice offices.

Also over 25% of graduates now elect to complete one-year residency programs, many of which at off campus medical centers fully concentrate on medical diagnosis and treatment of patients. For example, VA medical centers train 220 optometry residents each year who attend to a large and diverse number of medical patients while under the supervision of VA optometry and physician medical staff members.

There has been a disruption of optometry office practices similar to the one that took place within pharmacy that has spread to physicians who are now giving up ownership of office practices and their autonomy. Today 80% of licensed pharmacists no longer own or practice in an independent store because but are employees at one of the five national pharmacy chains. And, for the first time, a majority of newly minted physicians now become employees rather than start a practice.

As a result, medicine and pharmacy have developed specialties that open new avenues of practice within medical hospitals and clinics. In medicine there are the full-time hospitalists with no outside office practice. And full-time pharmacists hospital-based who are integral part of multidiscipline teams that evaluates and prescribe medications.

Yes, optometry residents at medical centers “get medical” too, but of a different and more diverse type from undergoing an intensive year of evaluating a large variety of medical eye conditions while learning how and when to refer to and interface with many other types of practitioners and medical specialists, a skill best acquired from hands-on experience.