Module: Visual Conditions and Functional Vision: Early Intervention Issues

Session 1: Working With Families and Eye Care Professionals

Handout A: Eye Care Professionals

Topor, I. (2003). *Eye care professionals*. Chapel Hill, NC: Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers With Visual Impairments, FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-CH.

Eye Specialist	What they do	Training
Ophthalmologist (MD)	Perform surgery	4 years college
	Diagnose and treat eye diseases	4 years medical school
	Test for visual acuity and visual field Prescribe glasses and contacts,	1 year general medical internship with a choice in pediatrics, internal medicine, or general surgery
	and, in some cases, low vision devices and medication	3 years ophthalmology residency
		1 to 2 year fellowship for subspecialty of pediatric ophthalmology
Optometrist (OD)	Diagnose vision problems and prescribes glasses and contact lens. May work with ophthalmologists to provide pre- and postoperative care	4 years of college 3 to 4 years optometry school
	May conduct low vision exams and provide vision-training activities if a specialist in low vision	
	Some states allow optometrists to prescribe medication.	
	Some optometrists may practice behavioral optometry.	

Eye Specialist	What they do	Training
Low vision specialists	Test for visual acuity and visual field Introduce patient to near and/or distance viewing low vision aids	Low vision specialists may be licensed ophthalmologists or optometrists with credentials as diplomates or certified low vision specialists.
	Recommend adaptations to patient's home and work environment	Certified low vision specialist may be educators with certification from either the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals or the PA College of Optometry.
Orthoptist	Evaluate and treat disorders of vision, eye movements, and eye alignment in children and adults Conduct diagnostic tests on patients with visual disorders, including lazy eye, strabismus (misaligned eyes), and double vision	Orthoptist programs are 2 years. A baccalaureate degree is required; however, admission criteria vary from school to school and exceptions are considered on an individual basis. In most programs, preparation and presentation of a scientific paper is
	Help the ophthalmologist design a treatment plan that may involve treatment by the orthoptist, surgical treatment by the ophthalmologist, or some combination of the two	usually required during the second year of education. Extensive clinical experience is part of every program.
Optician	Grind and fit lenses prescribed by the ophthalmologist or optometrist	 year of optical courses years apprenticeship under certified optician
Ocularist	Design and fit artificial eyes (prostheses) and scleral shell	Requires board certification Candidate takes exam through the National Examining Board of Ocularists.