



TN EYE SURGEONS

Senate Bill 2076 / House Bill 1952

Safe Surgery

- First and foremost, our concern is for Tennessee patients to have access to safe surgery by medically trained doctors.
- The eye is directly connected to the brain via the optic nerve--this is of vital importance. If eye surgery is not performed correctly, there can be lasting and devastating consequences.
- Ophthalmologists respect optometrists--many of us work directly with them in our practices and value their very important contributions to the overall eye care of patients.
- However, eye surgery is still surgery and carries with it the risks you associate with any surgery.
- A laser is a knife or scalpel and should be treated with the same amount of caution and used by trained medical professionals.

Economics and Geography

- A 2023 study by University of Washington researchers found that granting lasers to ODs in Kentucky, Louisiana, and Oklahoma resulted in no statistically significant improvement in drive-time access.
- A JAMA study shows that access does not increase in any meaningful way, that there is no statistically significant increase in drive time access if ODs cannot perform surgery. And although in some cases they are in micropolitan areas, in other cases patients are actually required to travel further to get a laser performed by an OD.
- As it stands now, 79.9% of Tennesseans are within a 30 min drive to an ophthalmologist; 98.5% are within 1 Hour.

Ophthalmologists

- > 4-year Bachelor's degree
- > Passage of MCAT (Medical College Admission Test)
- > 4 years of Medical School to earn a Doctor of Medicine
- > Mandatory 4 years of residency (1-year internship + 3-year residency)
- > Fellowship: 1-2 years of additional training to become a specialist (for example in glaucoma, pediatric, oculoplastics)

The best of the best: 60% are in the top 25% of their med school class. 4 years of 60-80 hour per week training, hundreds of directly observed microsurgeries by multiple surgeons to verify manual dexterity. Typical program has 8-16 residents being supervised by 15-20 MDs (around 1:2 trainee, trainer ratio)

Total post-high school training:

12-14 years

Are they a medical & surgical doctor?

Yes

Optometrists

- > 4-year Bachelor's degree
- > OAT (Optometry Admission Test)
- > 4 years of Optometry School
- > Optional: 1 year residency for specialization
Southern College of Optometry: one surgeon (MD) supervising approximately 530 students (1:530 trainer, trainee ratio)

Total post-high school training:

8-9 years

Are they a medical & surgical doctor?

No