



Dear Residents:

With less than 6 months to go, some of you may be wondering and asking yourself "What am I going to do with the rest of my life?" and, "How can I make my career interesting and fulfilling?" As you approach this milestone, we urge you to consider the *VA Optometric Research Fellowship* as an exciting choice.

Here are some reasons why and what the program provides for you:

- a) A chance to make a difference and to answer questions, particularly your own questions, especially if you are curious and refuse to believe everything you have previously been told. This probably describes all of you who had decided that a residency was important for your professional development.
- b) An opportunity to serve as an attending optometrist in the VABHCS optometry clinics and to be a lecturer /instructor at the New England College of Optometry. The saying goes that to truly grasp a topic, one should be able to explain it to others and the Fellowship Program provides you with a chance to develop your speaking skills. Furthermore, you will be giving back to the profession by serving as a role model and mentor while at the same time challenging your knowledge. .
- c) An opportunity to take courses towards an advanced degree in the Masters in Vision Science Graduate Program at the New England College of Optometry. These courses provide the academic/didactic foundation for research and credit for any courses taken can be applied towards the MS degree in Vision Science.
- d) The VA Optometric Research Fellowship salary and benefits are competitive with other fellowship programs (\$45,000 in year one with an increase in year two, comprehensive benefits including health insurance, sick days and vacation days) and funding to attend one academic conference per year.
- e) An opportunity to be mentored by an experienced clinical and research faculty from the VABHCS and the New England College of Optometry who are dedicated and passionate about their work.
- f) An opportunity to enhance your marketability and increase your professional prospects, whether they be in academia, industry, private practice, or a clinical or hospital setting.
- g) An opportunity to further the profession of optometry and improve its position and recognition in the research arena.
- h) An opportunity to enhance the visual welfare of America's Veterans and society as a whole.

Remember: *Preparation plus opportunity equals success!*

Here are some research myths that deserve attention:

- a) Clinical "research" is daunting.

Clinical research is energizing, stimulating and rewarding. The depth of knowledge one gains is incredible. Patient encounters revolve around your question and provide an opportunity to interact with the patient in depth.

- b) Research involves "crunching numbers" all the time.

The courses you take in the Masters Program prepare you for this aspect but also there are people on staff at the medical center and at our affiliates who will assist you in this area. They are available to help you design and analyze your study.

- c) I can't afford two more years of training. I have student loans.

Similar to your residency, student loans can be deferred. Furthermore, this is an investment in your future since a research fellowship will surely enhance the breadth and scope of opportunities. Just check the AOA new classifieds from the past year and you will see unique clinical and research opportunities for appropriately trained clinician/researcher optometrists.

This fellowship was not available a few short years ago. Optometry's involvement in clinical research is still just emerging and you have the opportunity to make a difference and to lead the way for our profession.

YOU are the future of optometry.

If you have any interest, or know of others who may be interested, please have them contact us.

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