



VA Connecticut Health Care System – Newington, CT

Residency in Ocular Disease

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SITE LOCATION: VA Connecticut Health Care System, Newington, Connecticut

NUMBER OF POSITIONS: Four

ESTABLISHED IN: 1978

This residency is sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and affiliated with the New England College of Optometry (NECO)

I. MISSION STATEMENT:

This residency exists to provide post-graduate optometrists with opportunities to:

- 1) Enhance their clinical experience as primary eye care providers, specifically in the management of ocular disease, in an outpatient clinic setting beyond the entry level of the evolving practice of optometry. This experience will prepare them to provide excellent eye care to the veteran patients that they serve as well as provide clinical experience that can be carried beyond the residency year to other health care settings.
- 2) Actively participate in advanced clinical and didactic education particularly in the areas of optometric management of ocular disease. This includes direct patient care, instruction of optometry trainees, rotations to other clinics within the VA Connecticut Health Care System, interaction with other health care providers and participation in didactic education as well as other scholarly activities.

II. RESIDENCY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following section is designed to help you understand the mission, goals and objectives of the residency as well as how your progress towards those goals and objectives are measured.

Measurement tools/outcomes are assessed by documented record review, patient logs, signature log book, activity log and direct observation/supervision. These measures are listed next to each objective in parentheses.



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Goal 1 - Clinical Activities

The resident will be trained to enhance clinical skills as a primary care optometrist with special emphasis on diagnosis and management of ocular disease in the veteran population.

- a) The resident will evaluate and manage a large number of patients, a majority of whom will require management of an ocular disease/condition
 - ii. Participate in at least **1275 patient encounters** with a majority (>50%) being diagnosed with an ocular disease. These encounters include comprehensive, problem specific exams, follow-up exams, and visual field exams. (*measured by patient log that documents all patients encounter including diagnoses*)
- b) Demonstrate ability to form the appropriate differential diagnosis of ocular disease. (*case discussion, documented chart reviews*)
- c) Perform and correctly interpret gonioscopy on a significant number of patients.
 - ii. At least 10 gonioscopy procedures must be directly observed and findings verified by an attending optometrist. (*signature log book, patient log & direct observation*)
- d) Examine and appropriately manage a significant number of patients with retinal disorders especially diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration. This includes arranging appropriate and timely referral for fluorescein angiography.
 - ii. Minimum of 20 cases in the first 6 months discussed with an attending optometrist. (*direct observation/patient log, review of consultation letters*)
- e) Interpret automated visual fields on a significant number of glaucoma patients, glaucoma suspects or patients with neuro-ophthalmic disorders.
 - ii. At least 25 cases must be presented to an attending optometrist in the first 3 months of the program for verification and discussion. (*signature log book, patient log & direct observation*)
- f) Manage or co-manage at least 75 glaucoma patients including prescribing glaucoma medications.
 - ii. Resident will keep a log of this activity and review at least 25 cases with an attending optometrist in the first 3 months of the program. (*signature log book, patient log & direct observation*)
- g) Become proficient in fundus photography/OCT imaging (direct observation)
 - ii. Attending optometrist will review at least 20 photos/OCT images with resident in the first 3 months of the program. (*signature log book, patient log & direct observation*)
- h) Demonstrate ability to properly manage patients with other ocular disorders such as cataracts and neuro-ophthalmic disorders. This includes providing appropriate patient education, referral or consultation and follow-up.
 - ii. At least 10 cases will be reviewed with an attending optometrist in the first 6 months of the program(*signature log book, patient log & direct observation*)
- i) Gain an understanding of the relationship between ocular disease and systemic disorders.



- ii. Demonstrate this understanding by appropriately ordering diagnostic testing and/or providing consultation to the primary care provider. At least 10 cases will be reviewed with an attending optometrist in the first 6 months of the program. (*direct observation, record review, case discussion*)

Goal 2 - Clinical Activities

To assist the resident in developing patient management skills within a multidisciplinary setting

- a) Demonstrate the ability to properly manage patients with ocular manifestations of systemic disorders such as retinal vascular disease, neuro-ophthalmic disorders, endocrine disorders, uveitis as well as others.
 - ii. This includes providing consultation to other health care providers, ordering consultation from other disciplines and arranging appropriate follow-up. Review at least 10 cases with an attending optometrist in the first 6 months. (*signature log book, direct observation/ documented chart reviews*)
- b) Demonstrate the ability to order, interpret and follow-up on the appropriate laboratory testing and imaging procedures as indicated by the eye exam.
 - ii. Review at least 10 cases of lab or imaging results with an attending optometrist in the first 6 months of the program. (*direct observation, documented chart reviews, patients log*)
- c) Be exposed to basic quality assurance monitors and policies. This is a peer- review process where periodic chart evaluations will be completed by attendings.
 - ii. 5 charts at 3 months, 6 months, 12 months (*documented chart reviews*)

Goal 3 – Educational Activities

To assist the resident in participating in clinical and didactic educational activities that enhance their clinical and scholarly experience beyond the entry level of the profession.

- a) Complete a paper of publishable quality before the end of the residency program. We strongly encourage submitting to an Optometric journal for publication. (*paper outlines, rough drafts & final papers are submitted and /evaluated by program coordinator and assistant coordinator*)
- b) Participate in educational programs within the Optometry Section including the Resident's Morning Lecture Series, Optometry Section Grand Rounds/Journal Club and the NECO sponsored residency conferences. This also means participating as a presenter when requested. (*direct observation/ activity log*)
 - iii. Residents will have 90% attendance throughout the residency year for Morning Lectures Series and Optometry monthly Grand Rounds / Journal Club
 - ii. Residents will attend NECO Sponsored Residency Conferences with 100% attendance.



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- c) Residents will participate and assist with patient care in ophthalmology clinics and other medical clinics on site. (*patient log*)
 - ii. At least 10 retina clinic sessions and 8 glaucoma clinic sessions throughout the residency year.
- d) The resident will gain knowledge in coordinating and communicating with the interdisciplinary team to maximize patient outcomes. (*activity log*)
 - ii. Rotate through other medical clinics within the hospital including Primary Care, Pharmacy, Rheumatology, Radiology & Vascular Surgery
 - iii. Observe a carotid duplex scan and CT scan
- e) Attend continuing education outside the VA Connecticut HCS as desired and as reasonable. (*activity log*)
- f) Residents will be provided with recommended reading list that includes landmark clinical trials important to the clinical care of our patient demographic
 - ii. Residents will present on landmark clinical trials during Wednesday Morning Lecture Series (*activity log*)

Goal 4 – Instructional activities

To assist the resident in providing knowledge and guidance to optometry students and health care providers within the health care system.

- a) Actively supervise and instruct fourth year optometry students. Introduce residents to the process of student assessment. (*direct observation, discussion and patient logs*)
- b) Interact with and observe with other health care providers within the health care system. (*direct observation, discussion and patient logs*)
- c) Participate as a presenter at the annual NECO sponsored resident's conference as well as local Grand Rounds programs and Optometry Morning Lecture Series. (*direct observation & activity log*)
 - iv. Residents will present a total of 3 lectures for the Morning Lecture Series and have 90% attendance throughout the residency year. Morning lectures include analysis of landmark clinical trials and updated research relevant to current clinical practice.
 - iii. Residents will present at least 2 cases in the Optometry Section Grand Rounds and have 90% attendance to all rounds throughout the year.
 - iv. Residents will lead journal club / discussion at least once during the residency year.
 - v. Residents will present at the Final NECO Sponsored Residency Conferences.



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III. RESIDENCY ACTIVITIES:

Residents will participate in the following activities as part of their educational experience:

1. Provide direct one on one patient care to a significant number of patients
2. Supervise fourth year optometry externs in the clinical care of patients
3. Rotate to medical specialty clinics within the Health Care System including; primary care, rheumatology, pharmacy, vascular surgery and radiology.
4. Attend educational conferences both within the VA CT HCS and other optometric conferences.
5. Participate in monthly Optometry section grand rounds and journal club.
6. Participate in weekly morning lecture series.

IV. LENGTH OF RESIDENCY:

This is a one year residency that begins July 1 and ends June 30. The resident's hours are 8:00am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday. There are no on call hours. Professional liability is covered for all official resident duties and assignments through the Federal Torts Reform Act.

V. FINANCIAL ASPECTS:

The current annual salary for this position is \$51,440 paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Leave is given at the rate of 4 hours of annual leave for every 2 weeks of employment, so essentially 13 paid vacation days per year. The VA observes all federal holidays. There will not be any clinics scheduled on those days. Educational leave for other professional activities are granted on a case by case basis by the Program Coordinator. Health care benefits are available to residents and are partially subsidized by the VA.

VI. CRITERIA FOR COMPLETION OF RESIDENCY:

Fulfilling the goals and objectives of the program are required to successfully complete the program. A summarized list is included below. Professional conduct as outlined in orientation materials and adherence to DVA policies and procedures are also required to complete the program.

1. Examine a **minimum of 1275 patients** through direct patient care and supervision of optometry externs. Patient care logs must be kept for each encounter.
2. Documentation of all clinical activities through the maintenance of an accurate patient log, signature log book, and activity log that will be reviewed by the Program Coordinator at regular intervals.
3. Complete rotations thorough medical specialty clinics within the VA Healthcare system including: primary care, rheumatology, pharmacy and radiology
4. Participate in 90% of monthly Grand Rounds and Journal Club, including presenting when assigned.
5. Participate in 90% morning lecture series on Wednesday mornings in Newington, including presenting when assigned.



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6. Participate in all educational conferences sponsored by The New England College of Optometry
7. Complete a paper of publishable quality
8. Complete all assigned evaluations of the residency program and faculty
9. Achieve satisfactory performance evaluations and satisfactory quality assurance monitors
10. Participate in quality assurance peer- review process. This includes periodic chart evaluations completed by attendings.
11. Obtain Licensure to practice optometry in a state, territory or commonwealth of the United States by the end of the residency year.

Upon meeting all completion requirements of the program, the resident will be awarded a Certificate of Completion by the New England College of Optometry.

VII. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:

1. Applicants must have earned an O.D. degree or expected to obtain an O.D. degree from a school or college of Optometry with an ACOE accreditation status prior to beginning the program.
2. Applicants must be actively pursuing completion of Parts I, II, III and TMOD of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry and furnish official copies of the results prior to the start of residency.
3. Applicants are expected to obtain a license in any state, territory, or Commonwealth of the United States, or in the District of Columbia before the completion of the VA Residency. If licensure is not obtain at the completion of residency a residency certificate cannot be awarded.
4. Must be a United States Citizen.
5. A personal interview is strongly encouraged, though virtual interviews may be accommodated.
6. Applicants must apply via the Optometry Residency Match (ORMatch).
7. **Application deadline is January 30, 2026**
8. Three letters of recommendation are required. These should be from faculty members or preceptors the applicant has worked with in the clinical setting.
9. Official transcripts from the school or college of optometry are required.
10. The Department of Veterans Affairs evaluates applicants without regard to gender, race, color, creed, age or national origin.

<https://www.eeoc.gov/fact-sheet/federal-laws-prohibiting-job-discrimination-questions-and-answers>



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ACCREDITATION STATUS:**ACCREDITATION STATUS:**

The Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE) has granted VA Connecticut Healthcare System-Newington Campus Residency in Ocular Disease the accreditation status of "Accredited." Accredited is a classification granted to an educational program indicating that the program generally meets the Standards for accreditation. For more information, see the ACOE's website at www.theACOE.org or contact the ACOE at accredit@theacoe.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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