VA New England Health Care System, White River Junction, VT

Residency in Ocular Disease
Emphasis Areas: Glaucoma and Retina

PROGRAM COORDINATOR: Richard Frick O.D., FAAO, ABCMO
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PROGRAM FACULTY: Joseph Gallagher, OD, FAAO
Erik Kuntzsch, OD, MS, ABO
Andrea Murphy, OD, FAAO, Chief of Optometry

SITE LOCATIONS: White River Junction, Vermont
NUMBER OF POSITIONS: Three
ESTABLISHED: 2003

This residency is funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs and affiliated with the New England College of Optometry.

All of our optometrists are highly involved in the optometric profession and academia with many years in advanced clinical practice and teaching. Our doctors are passionate about patient care, optometric education, and life-long learning. Dr. Frick is a nationally recognized speaker and has been honored with multiple clinical teaching awards. He volunteers with SVOSH and has served on over one dozen optometric brigades to bring eye-care and optometric education to the developing world. He serves as a Senior Consultant for the Accreditation Council of Optometric Education, the body that accredits optometric degree and residency programs.

Residents of the White River Junction VAMC will develop advanced competency in the treatment and management of ocular and ocular/systemic disease while gaining the skills to function independently in a multi-disciplinary hospital-based eye clinic located in a picturesque, rural setting. This pastoral location, with limited access to health care, provides a substantial volume of advanced stage ocular disease patients to our hospital. Residents will learn to manage advanced ocular disease patients *independently* in our optometry clinic. Each resident will diagnose and treat a substantial number of patients with glaucoma, macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and other retinal vascular diseases. Residents will also learn to co-manage surgical patients with our ophthalmology team. Further, residents will learn to perform intravenous fluorescein angiography, peri-ocular injections, and lump/bump ocular excisions.

White River Junction, VT is located in the Upper Connecticut River Valley 2 hours north of Boston, MA and 3 hours south of Montreal, Quebec. Bus, train, and interstate routes connect White River Junction to Boston, Montreal, and New York City. Dartmouth College is located just across the river in NH. Numerous cultural and outdoor activities are available throughout the four seasons and in the forests, mountains, lakes and streams of NH and VT.

MISSION:

VA Mission Statement

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.

VA Core Values

VA's five core values underscore the obligations inherent in VA's mission: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence. Taking the first letter of each word creates a powerful acronym, "I CARE,"

RESIDENCY MISSION STATEMENT:

This program will provide optometry residents with a comprehensive, clinical experience by immersing them in the care and management of Veteran patients with multiple, complex ocular and ocular-systemic disease processes. The residents will learn to independently and effectively practice medical optometry in a rural, medically under-served, multi-disciplinary hospital setting. The program will cultivate the motivation for lifelong learning through didactic and scholarly activities. Ultimately, the program will provide the residents with the experience, knowledge and skills necessary to develop advanced competency in eye, vision, and health care with emphasis in ocular disease specifically retina and glaucoma.

This program shall be of such excellence as to merit accreditation by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE) of the American Optometric Association (AOA).

PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Goal One: The resident will develop advanced competencies in the treatment and management of ocular and ocular-systemic diseases through examining and managing a cohort of rural Veterans.

Objective 1a: The resident will participate in at least 1,200 patient encounters. More than 50% of the encounters will involve ocular and/or ocular-systemic disease[s]. At least 10 exams will include in-patient encounters.

Objective 1b: The resident will develop advanced competency in the assessment and management of patients presenting with ocular manifestations of retinal [posterior segment] diseases.
Objective 1c: The resident will develop advanced competency in the evaluation and management of patients presenting for treatment and management of glaucoma.
Objective 1d: The resident will provide patient centered care, culturally sensitive education/ communication, and shared decision making.
Objective 1e: The resident will precept optometry students in clinical care for at least 10% of their total patient encounters.

Goal Two: The resident will participate in and coordinate multi-disciplinary care to provide the best patient outcomes.

Objective 2a: The resident will develop competency in peri-operative care of patients undergoing ocular surgery such as cataract extraction, glaucoma surgery, and retinal injections/laser.
Objective 2b: The resident will observe ocular surgeries and procedures such as cataract extraction, corneal procedures, oculoplastic procedures, intravenous fluorescein angiograms, and retinal injections/laser.
Objective 2c: The resident will attend inter-disciplinary clinical rotations such as neurology, rheumatology, Emergency Department, and/or Otolaryngology.
Objective 2d: The resident will co-manage ocular-systemic disease with the health care team through answering/ordering consults, referrals, emergency pager, and on call duty.

Goal Three: The resident will research and analyze scientific literature and employ evidence-based patient care.

Objective 3a: The resident will review scientific literature to enhance learning of ocular and ocular systemic disease. The subjects will include cases encountered in clinic, articles/chapters assigned by preceptors, and topics for scholarly presentations.
Objective 3b: The resident will demonstrate the ability to assimilate new knowledge and apply evidence-based clinical decision making into patient care decisions.
Objective 3c: The resident will write and present 6 ocular disease lectures at journal club. Two lectures will cover glaucoma, and two lectures will include retina [posterior segment] diseases.

Goal Four: The resident will attend didactic activities to promote development of advanced competencies in ocular and ocular-systemic disease.

Objective 4a: The resident will attend two ophthalmic continuing education meetings and log 20 hours of education with >50% being ocular and ocular systemic disease topics.
Objective 4b: The resident will attend and participate in 4 NECO Residency Conferences.
Objective 4c: The resident will attend weekly journal club meetings

Goal Five: The resident will complete scholarly work to promote development of advanced competencies in ocular and ocular-systemic disease.

Objective 5a: The resident will write and deliver a presentation on ocular disease at the NECO Spring Residency Conference.
Objective 5b: The resident will research and write an ocular disease paper of publishable quality.

LENGTH OF RESIDENCY AND DUTY HOURS:

This residency commences on July 1st every year and ends June 30th of the following year. Duty hours are Monday through Friday 8:00a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A compressed tour of duty may be offered to the resident if clinic needs and resident requirements are met. The resident will cover pager duty in tandem with an attending doctor for a minimum of 6 weeks of On-call hours which will be in addition to regular duty hours. Specific call hours are determined by the clinic schedule and managed by the resident.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS:

The annual salary is $52,150.

https://vaww.oaa.med.va.gov/DBReports/LocBasedStipends.aspx
Annual leave (vacation) =13 days per year
Sick leave= 13 days per year
[Annual and sick leave are accrued at 4 hours every 2 weeks.]
Residents may be granted administrative leave to attend educational meetings or for licensing exams, as long as it is not excessive or in conflict with the clinic's ability to provide patient care.

Residents are appointed as VA employees; therefore, they are covered by the Federal Tort Claims Act for all care provided as a resident at the VA. It should be noted that the policy does not cover residents in practice outside VHA beyond duty hours.

Health insurance benefits are available through VA.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:

1. Applicants must have earned a Doctor of Optometry degree from a school or college of optometry with an ACOE accreditation status prior to the onset of the program year.
2. Applicants ideally complete and pass Parts I, II, III and TMOD of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry [NBEO] prior to the start of the residency year. If not, these NBEO exams must be completed prior to end of the residency year to obtain a completion certificate.
3. Per VHA Directive 1121(2): optometric residents must "Obtain licensure in a State, territory, or Commonwealth of the United States, or in the District of Columbia before completion of the first year of VA residency" in order to obtain a completion certificate. Residents are encouraged to obtain licensure as soon as possible.
4. Applicants must apply via the National Matching Services, Inc. ORMatch (Optometry Residency Matching Services). Follow the application guidelines at: https://natmatch.com/ormatch/
5. Deadline for applications is January 29, 2027.

6. Selection process
    a. The residency program coordinator and faculty review the applications received and determine which candidates will be invited to a personal interview. Onsite interviews are strongly encouraged, but virtual interviews will be available.
    b. After completion of the interviews, the residency coordinator and faculty rank the applicants based on their application and interview. Ranking is determined by clinical and academic credentials, letters of recommendation, interpersonal skills and interest in the program. Rankings are submitted to ORMatch by the deadline. All ORMatch rules and processes are followed throughout the application process, match and post-match periods.
7. The Department of Veterans Affairs does not discriminate based on gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. United States citizenship is required to qualify for VHA appointment in a paid VA optometry resident position that is funded by the Office of Academic Affiliations. Reference: VA Handbook 5005/57, Part II, Chapter 3, Paragraph 3.g.(1) & (5)(c), dated June 14, 2012.
8. All candidates must submit these items:
    a. Letter of intent
    b. Curriculum vitae
    c. NBEO scores
    d. Official optometry school transcript
    e. 3 letters of recommendation from clinical preceptors

CRITERIA FOR COMPLETION OF RESIDENCY:

1. The resident must complete the goals and objectives of the program.
2. The resident must complete 12 months of clinical training and a minimum of 1200 patient encounters. Greater than 50% of the encounters will include ocular and/or systemic disease. At least 30% of the cases should involve glaucoma or glaucoma suspects; at least 30% of the cases should involve retina or posterior segment disease. At least 10 cases should be in-patient encounters. Clinical duties will include 6 weeks of on call duty for each resident.
3. Per VHA Directive 1121(2): optometric residents must "Obtain licensure in a State, territory, or Commonwealth of the United States, or in the District of Columbia before completion of the first year of VA residency". Residents are encouraged to obtain licensure as soon as possible.
4. The resident is required to deliver evidenced based patient care services at a level commensurate with the standard of care and satisfactory to those responsible for the supervision of the residency program.
5. The resident is expected to perform in a professional manner consistent with the Code of Ethics of the American Optometric Association.
6. The resident is required to write an ocular disease paper of publishable quality and to meet the associated deadlines.
7. The resident is required to present 6 ocular disease lectures during journal club. At least two lectures will cover glaucoma. At least two lectures will cover retina or poster segment disease.

8. The resident is required to complete accurate logs:
    a. Resident Patient Log
    b. Resident Activity Log
9. The resident is required to complete all evaluations:
    a. Self-assessment: initial and final
    b. Evaluations of Residency Program
    c. Evaluations of Residency Supervisor
    d. Evaluations of Clinical Supervisors
    e. Exit survey
10. The resident must attend 2 professional optometric meetings and log 20 hours of continuing education.
11. The resident must attend all four NECO conferences and complete all associated conference assignments in a timely fashion to include a presentation on ocular disease at the final NECO conference.

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

ACCREDITATION STATUS:

The Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE) has granted VA New England Health Care System White River Junction 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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