

# DOCTORS OF OPTOMETRY ARE A CRITICAL KEY TO PRIMARY EYE HEALTH IN THE U.S.

Up to 16 million Americans struggle with undiagnosed or untreated vision impairments.<sup>1</sup> Combined with the fact that eye diseases, vision loss, and eye disorders create an estimated \$139 billion economic burden. Doctors of optometry are geographically accessible and uniquely available to furnish Americans' primary eye care services.

Doctors of optometry, also recognized as physicians, deliver an essential component of patients' overall primary health that goes well beyond examining vision acuity to prescribe glasses or contact lenses. An in-person, comprehensive eye exam includes diagnosis and management of eye diseases and treatment of systemic diseases, including diabetes, high blood pressure and even cancer. They prescribe medication to treat eye diseases, treat glaucoma, perform pre- and post-operative evaluations and perform follow-up care.



Doctors of optometry provide more than **two-thirds of primary eye health care in America**



More than **99 percent of the U.S. population** lives in counties with a doctor of optometry



**5,800 communities nationwide,** doctors of optometry are the only primary eye and vision care providers

## DOCTORS OF OPTOMETRY CAN ALSO:

- Prescribe medication to treat eye diseases in drop, ointment or pill form.
- Evaluate visual acuity for corrective prescriptions (refraction).
- Determine the patient's ability to focus and coordinate the eyes and to judge depth and see colors accurately.
- Prescribe eyeglasses, contact lenses, low vision aids, and deliver rehabilitation and vision therapy.
- Perform minor surgical procedures such as removing foreign objects from the eye and cornea.
- Evaluate and follow patients with diseases such as cataract, macular degeneration, glaucoma, and diabetes. They will co-manage these diseases when further care is necessary by referring patients to the appropriate surgical eye specialty and routinely provide post-op care when their patients are returned to them.
- Treat eye trauma and acute eye infections: corneal abrasions, chemical burns, foreign bodies on the surface of the eye or eyelids, thermal burns, conjunctivitis, and inflammation of the iris.

## EXPANDED OPTOMETRIC SCOPE IMPROVES ACCESS TO CRITICAL EYE HEALTH SERVICES AND REDUCES HEALTHCARE COSTS

Optometry is a regulated profession and scope of practice varies between states. Practice rights should not be a political issue that is inconsistent across states but an issue of patient access to quality eye health and vision care. By allowing all doctors of optometry to practice to the full extent of their training, patients enjoy greater access to the latest procedures and better preventive care as many medical conditions will be caught earlier. If appropriate preventive steps are not taken, costs will burgeon as the population ages and life expectancy increases.