

APPENDIX: M



Policy Statements and Guidelines

Role of Ophthalmology

Preamble

All evaluations that purport to diagnose eye disease should be carried out by a physician. An ophthalmologist is a doctor of medicine who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the eye, in addition to diagnosing systemic disease when manifest in eye signs or symptoms.

The practice of ophthalmology has historically encompassed all aspects of visual function in health and disease, including refraction, orthoptics, binocular vision and strabismus. Medical and surgical treatment of disease involving the visual system and awareness of ocular manifestations of systemic disease are also an integral part of the practice of ophthalmology.

Evaluation

For the ultimate benefit of the public, a clear distinction should be made between a diagnostic eye examination and an examination for the purpose of refraction. A diagnostic eye examination involves the practice of medicine and requires the highly specialized training of a physician. A refractive examination involves the taking of measurements from the visual system, which is simply a data-gathering procedure and involves no medical expertise.

The use of ancillary personnel to perform certain nonmedical procedures or tests is appropriate as a means of increasing the availability of ophthalmologists to provide medical services and to provide comprehensive and efficient eye care to the greatest number of people. It is understood that such personnel work with and are supervised by ophthalmologists at all times. The ophthalmologist is responsible for the delivery of comprehensive eye care, which includes primary, secondary or tertiary care.

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