

Career Counseling in OPHTHALMOLOGY

Frequently-Asked Questions

This booklet has been prepared by the Department of OPHTHALMOLOGY in response to questions frequently asked by medical students who wish to explore the training and career opportunities in this field. We hope that it will be helpful to students and serve as a basis of discussion in individual meetings with faculty members and residents.

- **Can you give me a brief description of the field? What are the key elements of this field that define it?**

Ophthalmology is a dynamic field allowing one to be challenged in both medical diagnosis and at same time surgical issues. The field has undergone some really interesting technological advances in recent years.

- **What is the patient population that I will encounter? Will it include both children and adults? Will there be emergency work? What types of technology will I encounter?**

All ages can be seen in ophthalmology; there are emergencies in the field but if one chooses not to be involved in ophthalmic trauma or an academic medical institution, it is very reasonable. Technology regarding surgery is quite advanced in many subspecialties.

- **Is it possible to describe the personality characteristics of many physicians in this field?**

We are looking for hard working, dedicated individuals that are team players.

- **How long is the training program/residency?**

3 years with a preceding year in medicine, surgery, or transition in most cases.

- **Are there fellowships available after residency?**

Yes, in all subspecialties: retina, cornea, glaucoma, neuro-ophthalmology, refractive surgery, pediatric, oculoplastic, uveitis, pathology, oncology

- **What is the role of my USMLE Step 1 score? What is a competitive score to qualify for an interview? If I failed Step 1 what are my options? Should I take Step 2 early?**

This score is important—the average we have in entry level is 237. No good options if you fail your USMLE in this field. If you have received a poor or marginal USMLE score, you should take USMLE 2 early.

- **Do I need a Step 2 Clinical Knowledge score to be screened for an interview? To be ranked? NO**

- **Is there anything that I can do in my rotation or elective experience in this field to enhance my qualifications?**

Work well with others and show a real commitment to the field.

- **Should I take outside electives in other institutions? If so, how many are advised and allowed?**

Yes, 1 or 2 outside so you get an opportunity to "audition".

- **If your field requires a preliminary year what are your recommendations regarding that year?**

Yes, transitional or medicine preferred.

- **Is a research experience important in my application to this field? Do I need to do a one year research experience? Will research offset a low Step 1 score? Should I have publications to qualify for your field?**

Research is important and a year of research certainly will not hurt. If grades are very low, it is usually not a good idea to apply to this very competitive field. Publications and presentations are looked at positively.

- **Is community service important in my application to this field?**

Yes, to show one's commitment to their surroundings and people.

- **What do you advise on obtaining letters of recommendation? Should they all be from the field? How many should I have? Do I need a chair's letter? If so, how do I obtain that letter?**

Letters do not all need to be in field but at least 1 or 2 should be. Chair's letter only written if the medical student is well known to him or her and is not mandatory.

- **How do I meet with residents in the field and ask them to share their experiences and advice? Can I find residents with educational backgrounds similar to mine?**

The best way is to visit our clinic at KCHC E building 8th floor where 11/21 residents are assigned. They will share their experiences and some will be of similar educational background.

- **If I want to learn more about the field, can you recommend how I do that?**

I believe the best way is to spend at least a few days in our busy KCHC clinic working alongside the residents. One can usually see rather quickly if this is the field for you to consider for your career.

2 REFERENCES RELATING TO OPHTHALMOLOGY MATCH:

**Yousuf SJ, Kwagyan J, Jones LS.
Applicants' choice of an ophthalmology residency program.
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**Yousuf SJ, Jones LS. Ophthalmology Residency Match outcomes for
2011.
Ophthalmology. 2012 Mar;119(3):642-6.**