

I do not believe that we should ignore the very specific education and training requirements between ophthalmologists and optometrists. Performing surgery on the eye requires a higher degree of medical knowledge and understanding than optometrists are currently required to have. We should respect the difference between these professions and allow only a medical doctor to perform this critical surgery. Sight is such an important and delicate sense that surgery should be confined to practitioners who have a medical degree, pertinent knowledge and appropriate training.

There is a considerable difference between the two professions:

—As a medical doctor who has completed college and at least eight years of additional medical training, an ophthalmologist is licensed to practice medicine and surgery. An ophthalmologist diagnoses and treats all eye diseases, performs eye surgery and prescribes and fits eyeglasses and contact lenses to correct vision problems.

—Optometrists are eye care professionals who provide primary vision care ranging from sight testing and correction to the diagnosis, treatment and management of vision changes. An optometrist is not a medical doctor. They receive a doctor of optometry (OD) degree after completing four years of optometry school, preceded by at least three years of college.

As the daughter of an engineer who was one of the pioneers of eye surgery equipment development I have seen first-hand how critically important this process is to patients and their doctors. It must continue to reside in the hands of a medical doctor only.