



The Nebraska Board of Medicine and Surgery

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Nebraska Board of Medicine

Opinion on the Credentialing Review Application for Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty

As the Board of Medicine, our primary concern is always patient safety and protection. When considering expanding the optometric scope of practice to include Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty, or SLT, it is important to keep in mind whether there is sufficient education and training to not only perform the procedure, but to address any adverse outcomes from this surgery. The information provided during the Technical Review Committee process raises serious concerns regarding patient safety and protection.

Available data on the issue of SLT indicates that in Oklahoma, where optometrists have a wider scope of practice that includes SLT, more frequent repeat surgeries have been documented when comparing optometrists to ophthalmologists. The lack of surgical training on patients is also a concern when considering the potential complications of SLT and how additional urgent surgical care can be delayed.

There are additional concerns on whether the benchmark of sufficient education and training has been met when comparing training between ophthalmologists and optometry. Ophthalmologists, as physicians who train for at least four additional years, receive direct, one-on-one supervision by certified eye surgeons when training to perform surgeries. The same cannot be said of optometric education, especially when one takes into account the large class sizes and the fact that only two out of 23 optometry schools reside in states where laser surgeries by optometrists are legal. One can conclude that in 91% of optometry schools there is no hands-on training on live patients available for surgical procedures, and instead only models or simulations are used. Though the proposal seeks to address the lack of training by providing a requirement of completing a 16-hour weekend course and three SLT procedures, this proposed course is in no way sufficient, nor can it capture the nuance and skills that years of medical training and ophthalmology residency can provide. It is also important to note that ophthalmologists train and test via independent accrediting organizations.

Based on the proposal to the Technical Review Committee, the Board of Medicine is concerned that if this proposal is approved, patient safety will be at risk. These risks are detrimental to the health of Nebraskans, and it is for this reason that the Board of Medicine opposes the proposal to expand optometric scope to include SLT. We hope the technical review committee agrees with our conclusions.

The position as stated in this letter represents the position of the Board of Medicine and Surgery and does not necessarily represent the position of the Department of Health and Human Services or the Division of Public Health.

Sincerely,

Board of Medicine and Surgery

Jodanne W. Hedrick, DO, Chairperson