

# Ophthalmic Medical Personnel

## What is an ophthalmic technician?

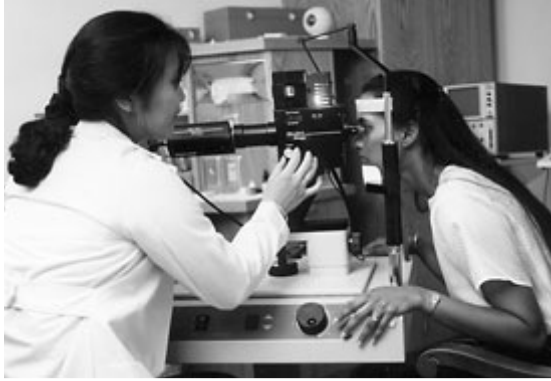
Ophthalmic medical personnel (OMP) play a vital role in the allied health profession. OMP work with ophthalmologists and their patients. OMP are part of a professional team of eye care providers, and supply important information to the physician who is treating the patient. OMP assist in areas such as surgery and patient education/compliance, as well as the following:

- Taking patient histories
- Providing patient services
- Taking eye measurements
- Testing visual acuity
- Reading visual acuity
- Reading eyeglasses

## What is ophthalmology?

Ophthalmology is a branch of medicine specializing in the anatomy, function and diseases of the eye. Ophthalmologists specialize in the medical and surgical treatment of eye disorders, vision measurements for glasses (refraction), eye muscle exercises (orthoptics), and the prevention of blindness and care for the blind. Those considering the field should also be aware that certain visual and motor abilities are necessary for effective clinical and surgical practice.

<b>A career as an ophthalmic allied health professional offers you:</b>	<b>What is the difference between ophthalmology and optometry?</b>
■ <b>Prestige</b>	The distinction between ophthalmology and optometry is a frequent source of confusion. In addition to the fact that both are concerned with eye care, several other factors contribute to this misunderstanding. One source of confusion stems from the fact that both ophthalmologists and optometrists are referred to as "eye doctors", although, unlike ophthalmologists, optometrists often do not have medical degrees.
■ <b>Job security</b>	The scope of an ophthalmologist's practice is broad. An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor (MD) who specializes in all aspects of eye care, including diagnosis, management, and surgery of ocular diseases and disorders. Optometrists traditionally involve examining the eye for the purpose of prescribing and dispensing corrective lenses and screening vision to detect certain eye abnormalities.
■ <b>Excellent compensation</b>	Ophthalmologists have a full medical education, followed by extensive clinical and surgical training in ophthalmology.
■ <b>Career advancement</b>	
■ <b>Ability to help others</b>	



## The Eye Care Team

The eye care team includes the ophthalmologists, nurses and allied health. Specifically, within allied health, several areas of expertise exist, including ophthalmic assistant, ophthalmic technicians/technologists, orthoptists, ophthalmic photographers, and ophthalmic dispensing opticians.

### What can I expect on the job?

The ophthalmic allied health professional is a skilled person, qualified by didactic and clinical ophthalmic training, who performs ophthalmic procedures under the direction or supervision of a physician licensed to practice medicine and surgery and qualified in ophthalmology.

The function of the ophthalmic allied health professional is to assist the ophthalmologist by performing tasks, collecting data, administering treatment ordered by an ophthalmologist, and supervising patients.

Duties that may be performed by an ophthalmic allied health professional include:

1. Taking a medical history
2. Performing diagnostic tests
3. Taking anatomical and functional ocular measurements of the eye and surrounding tissue
4. Testing ocular functions, including visual acuity and visual fields
5. Administering topical ophthalmic and oral medications
6. Instructing the patient in personal care and the use of contact lenses
7. Caring for and maintaining ophthalmic instruments and equipment
8. Caring for, and maintaining and sterilizing surgical instruments
9. Assisting in ophthalmic surgery in the office, hospital, or ambulatory surgical center setting
10. Taking optical measurements including A-Scan ultrasound
11. Assisting in the fitting of contact lenses
12. Such other tasks as may be delegated consistent with sound medical practice (eg, use of computerized ophthalmic equipment)
13. Performing ophthalmic clinical photography and fluorescence angiography of the eye
14. Administering advanced ocular motility and binocular function tests
15. Carrying out ocular electrophysiological procedures
16. Performing advanced microbiological procedures
17. Providing supervision and instruction of other ophthalmic

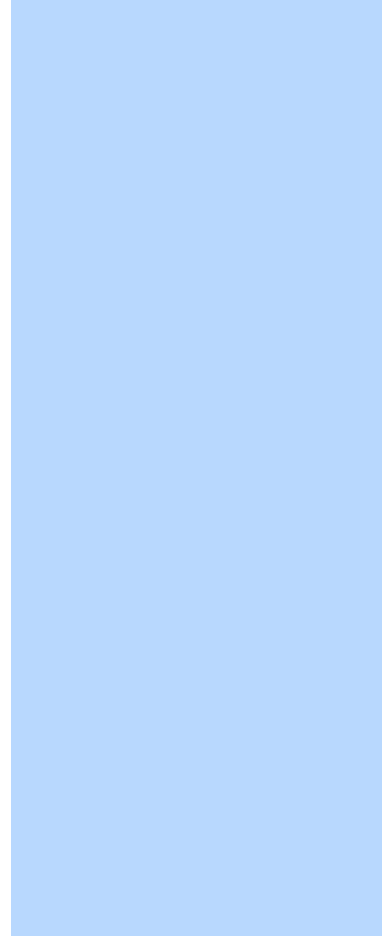
#### Main Practice Setting\*

	<b>65.1%</b> Private MD Group Practice
	<b>13.6%</b> Private MD Solo Practice
	<b>13.3%</b> Multispecialty Clinic
	<b>8.7%</b> Hospital
	<b>6.9%</b> University Clinic
	<b>4.5%</b> HMO / PPO
	<b>3.5%</b> Other Practice Setting
	<b>2.9%</b> Consultant / Self-Employed / Independent Contractor
	<b>0.4%</b> Ophthalmic Instrument Manufacturer

*\* 2000 National Salary & Benefits Report for Ophthalmic Medical Personnel, Association of Technical Personnel in Ophthalmology*

personnel and patients

Ophthalmic allied health professionals supply important information to the physician who is treating the patient and assist in areas such as surgery and patient education/compliance; they are not independent practitioners and do not diagnose or treat eye disorders, nor do they prescribe medications.



ATPO. (2005). *Ophthalmic Medical Personnel* [Brochure]. Author. Retrieved October 22, 2005, from Association of Technical Personnel in Ophthalmology Web site:  
<http://www.atpo.org>