

Letters

Attend Mid-Year Forum 2022

The Mid-Year Forum is arguably the most valuable and impactful meeting for our profession. Every year, ophthalmology faces an increasing number of scope battles, restrictions to our practice, and reimbursement cuts. Just in the past few years, optometrists in several states have obtained privileges to perform laser and surgical procedures around the eye. Now, Veterans Affairs (VA) is considering measures to solidify national scope expansion that would significantly impact resident surgical education. And last December, in what could be an annual advocacy battle, ophthalmology narrowly averted a 10% cut in Medicare reimbursements for the coming year. The Mid-Year Forum is the place to protect and fight for our profession.

Each year, we gather on Capitol Hill and are briefed about the current state of ophthalmology and medicine as a whole. The Academy identifies our goals for the year, and we spend a day lobbying our representatives on Capitol Hill. This is our main opportunity to speak up and educate the policy makers who will ultimately decide the future of our profession. If we do not show up to defend ourselves and our patients, no one else will.

This is especially vital for Young Ophthalmologists (YOs), who are just beginning this wonderful journey in the ophthalmology profession and are looking forward to several decades of practice. We have by far the most to gain—or to lose—from the policies that are enacted. And as part of a demographic that politicians are eager to win over, YO voices can turn the tide in the national discussion.

Political outcomes aside, the Mid-Year Forum is also a valuable meeting from a networking standpoint. The “who’s who” of ophthalmology is in attendance, including residency and fellowship directors, past and current Academy presidents, and current and future leaders in our profession. The small size of the meeting and leadership programs allow for personal, one-on-one interactions with these giants in our field. It’s a unique opportunity to learn invaluable pearls about life after residency that cannot be gleaned from our textbooks.

Overall, the Mid-Year Forum is an important meeting that every ophthalmologist should experience at least once in his or her career. Attending the Mid-Year Forum changed the trajectory of my career and set me on a path for success. It’s an opportunity that is worth every second of your time—guaranteed.

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Editors’ note. You can learn more and register for Mid-Year Forum 2022 at aao.org/myf.

Is Small Practice for Women?

As the owner of a small private practice, I read with great interest the stories of Drs. Choi, Grover, Goel, and Melendez as they discussed the business model of smaller practices in ophthalmology and the value of running a practice with autonomy. (“Going Solo: Four Ophthalmologists Share Their Stories,” October). All of them offered wonderful insights into the advantages of private practice and specific strategies for striking out on your own. However, because many practicing ophthalmologists are women, I was surprised that not one woman physician was featured in the article.

Based on my experience opening a small practice with my ophthalmologist husband, I think that the issues facing women practice owners differ from those of our male counterparts. Taking time off for maternity leave (and determining who would see my postoperative patients) and scheduling breastfeeding/pumping time during my surgical and clinic schedule (and the associated loss of revenue) were not things my husband needed to think about.

Female practice owners can also face unique challenges in relating to their staff members. As has been greatly discussed in the business literature, women leaders risk being viewed as unlikable and unpleasant if they are as authoritative as their male counterparts. To address this, I always make small talk with my staff when I enter the clinic, and I make requests in a softer manner than my husband does.

At a glance, it might appear that these obstacles would make practice ownership significantly more challenging for women than for men. In fact, many women resort to employed positions or boxed medicine because they are unsure how to navigate these hurdles. Bringing these challenges to the forefront and discussing how women have surmounted them would be the first step in paving that path for the next generation.

I think the younger generation of women in ophthalmology would benefit from a frank discussion from this perspective. Otherwise, the narrative suggests that practice ownership is not feasible for women, and that simply is not true. It is up to small practice owners to demonstrate it can be done, regardless of gender.

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Correction. In “Ischemic Optic Neuropathy Following Cataract Surgery” (Journal Highlights, December), *EyeNet* removed part of the quote from Heather Moss, MD, PhD, for reasons of space. Important content was lost in the abridgment. In the online version of the article, the full quote has been reinstated (aao.org/eyenet/correction). *EyeNet* regrets the error.