

OPHTHALMOLOGY RESIDENCY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SPECIALTY OVERVIEW

Surgical subspecialty in medical and surgical eye care. Training all the way from optics, refraction and prescribing glasses to treatment of medical conditions such as glaucoma and surgical procedures such as cataract extraction, ocular plastics, strabismus surgery, laser surgery and other retinal procedures. Patient ages range from infancy to the elderly.

HOW LONG IS THE TRAINING IN THIS SPECIALTY?

1 year internship and 3 years residency

ARE THERE SUBSPECIALTIES? WHAT ARE THEY?

Yes, obtained through fellowship training: Retina , Ocular Plastics, Neuro-ophthalmology, Pediatrics, Cornea and Refractive Surgery, Glaucoma and Ocular Pathology.

HOW COMPETITIVE IS THE SPECIALTY OVERALL? THE TTUHSC SOM PROGRAM?

Fairly competitive, but if you have a good USMLE score, letters of reference and apply to enough programs you should be able to find a spot. The TTUHSC SOM program is about the same as most programs in the country.

WHAT ARE THE AVERAGE STEP 1 SCORES OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS IN THIS SPECIALTY?

A 2-digit score of approximately 90 or above, but some do make it with scores in the 80's.

DOES A FIRST TIME STEP 1 FAILURE PREVENT STUDENTS FROM MATCHING INTO THIS SPECIALTY?

Not necessarily

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO HAVE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE?

Helpful, but not at all mandatory.

HOW IMPORTANT IS INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS?

Not really important

WHAT ARE THE TOP REGIONAL PROGRAMS IN THIS SPECIALTY?

UT Southwestern, Cullen Eye Institute (Baylor), Scott and White, and we like to think that we are as well.

WHAT ARE THE TOP NATIONAL PROGRAMS IN THIS SPECIALTY?

Wills Eye (Philadelphia), Bascom Palmer (Miami) , Wilmer (Johns Hopkins)

IN GENERAL, HOW MANY PROGRAMS SHOULD STUDENTS APPLY TO? At least 10 or more.

WHAT ARE PROGRAM DIRECTORS LOOKING FOR IN APPLICANTS FOR THIS SPECIALTY?

High level of interest, good academics, self-motivated learner and someone with a good work ethic and attitude and team spirit

FROM WHICH DEPARTMENT(S) AND WHAT RANKS OF FACULTY SHOULD STUDENTS REQUEST LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION?

One or two at least from Ophthalmology departments – here or at one at which student rotates. Rank of faculty is not that important as content of the letter.

ARE “AUDITION ELECTIVES” COMMONLY REQUIRED OR STRONGLY RECOMMENDED BY PROGRAMS IN THIS SPECIALTY?

Very strongly recommended. If we see how you are to work with, this will factor strongly into the decision making process

WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO DURING THEIR FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD YEARS OF MEDICAL SCHOOL TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THIS SPECIALTY?

Become good physicians and do as well as they can academically. The specialty training will come later. Doing at least one short rotation within ophthalmology is important to help the student solidify their choice. If they have spare time in between semesters or rotations, they can do informal rotations with us for more exposure. If they are fairly sure about doing Ophthalmology then they should arrange fourth year July or August Ophthalmology 2-4 week rotation(s) for exposure and to get letters of reference, before the early application process.