



MYTH

“Physician Assistants (PAs) and Nurse Practitioners are supplanting optometrists in Florida and are permitted to perform eye surgery, while Florida optometrists are not.”

The Facts:

To say that PAs and NPs are “supplanting” optometrists in Florida is **PATENTLY FALSE!**

- Florida’s physician assistants (PAs) **do not** practice independently—they practice under the supervision of medical doctors and in fact, are regulated by the Florida Board of Medicine. PA’s do not independently perform eye surgery in Florida. They assist the surgeon during certain surgeries, but only do so under the close supervision of the surgeon.
- While NPs may practice independently, they are **not** authorized to perform eye surgery—including the surgeries that that SB 876/HB 631 would grant Florida optometrists.
- It is **extremely rare** for PAs to work in ophthalmology practices. In fact, Courts in this state have found that using PAs in an ophthalmology practice, even when PAs are directly supervised by the ophthalmologist, is “unorthodox and controversial...highly unusual and not widely accepted in the United States.”

The Statistics:

- There is **no statistical evidence** to prove that an overwhelming number of PA’s or NPs in Florida are “supplanting” optometrists, nor is there any evidence that they are independently performing eye surgery.

Also, it is extremely rare for PAs in Florida to perform any procedure on the eye—even under supervision of an ophthalmologist:

- **Nationally**, there are over 104,000 PAs in practice across America.
 - Of these **only 80 PAs nationwide** are specializing in ophthalmology¹
 - ***In other words, a mere .08% of the nation’s PA’s even specialize in ophthalmology***
- **In Florida** there are only 6 ophthalmology practices employing PAs.²
 - Of these practices, **only two PAs** appear to be involved in ophthalmic. surgery in FL, but only under the **direct** supervision of an ophthalmologist.

What do the Experts say?

“Regarding ophthalmic surgery, PA’s in general do not participate in this highly specialized field, and those few who do never perform surgical procedures without appropriate, close supervision of their physician...It is my opinion that it is inappropriate for PA’s to act as primary surgeons in ophthalmology.”

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SOURCES:

¹National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants 2019 Statistical Profile of Certified Physician Assistants by Specialty Annual Report

²Florida Society of Ophthalmology