OVERVIEW OF DANGEROUS OPTOMETRIC SURGERY LEGISLATION

Dangerous legislation has just been introduced in the Florida House (HB 1037) and the Senate (SB 1168) which—for the first time in the history of Florida—would allow optometrists (ODs) to cut on the human eye-ball, prescribe virtually all oral medications including an array of habit forming narcotics, and begin to treat systemic diseases, all while operating without any medical regulatory oversight. ODs are not medical doctors and are not trained in surgery! The legislation would abolish any distinctions between ODs and ophthalmologists, and allow ODs to perform virtually all of the functions of a medical doctor without going to medical school.

THE LEGISLATION THREATENS THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF OUR PATIENTS.

- Ocular surgery is intricate and surgical errors can lead to blindness.
- Putting a scalpel or a laser into the hands of someone that did not go to medical school, and allowing that person to cut on the eyeball is irresponsible.
- ODs lack the years of education, training and surgical residency/fellowship experience that ophthalmologists have.
- Surgical competence is not something that one can achieve online or over a weekend course.

THE LEGISLATION WOULD NOT SAVE MONEY, IT WOULD DRIVE COSTS UP.

- ODs and Ophthalmologists are paid exactly the same for procedures they perform.
- Oklahoma is one of the few states where ODs are authorized to perform laser surgery. Experts from the University of Michigan recently conducted a study that compared surgical outcomes of laser surgeries performed by ophthalmologists in Oklahoma to those performed by ODs. The results of that study are startling. It shows that the frequency of repeat surgeries by ODs was more than double the frequency of repeat surgeries by ophthalmologists. Adverse surgical events, repeat surgeries and surgical repairs not only harm patients, they inevitably drive up healthcare costs by requiring additional surgical procedures and forcing patients out of the workplace for longer periods of time.
• By allowing thousands of ODs in the State to prescribe habit forming narcotics, the legislation can only exacerbate the State’s opioid crisis and further drive up health care costs which are already substantial. In fact, the Palm Beach Post reports that hospital costs alone for the opioid epidemic topped more than $1.1 billion in the first nine months of 2015.

**THE LEGISLATION IS NOT NEEDED.**

• The Legislature looked at this very issue in 2013 and in order to protect patients concluded that ODs should **not** perform surgery of any kind including the use of lasers, should **not** treat systemic diseases and should **not** have the unbridled authority to prescribe habit forming narcotics. Nothing has change since 2013 for the Legislature to do away with those patient protections now.

• In fact, there are real dangers in expanding ODs scope of practice. Cases in point:
  • The surgical outcome study mentioned above.
  • The debacle that occurred in the VA Hospital in California where ODs practicing beyond their scope resulted in many of our veterans being blinded.

**THIS DANGEROUS LEGISLATION IS BAD PUBLIC POLICY AND DOES A DISSERVICE TO PATIENTS. IF ODs WANT TO PRACTICE MEDICINE THEY SHOULD GO TO MEDICAL SCHOOL.**