Allied Health Recruitment and Training Toolkit

The Lingering Allied Health Personnel Shortage
For more than a decade, a shortage of qualified ophthalmic medical personnel has existed in most communities nationwide. Today it is estimated that there is a need for an additional 6,000 ophthalmic medical personnel in this country. With challenges such as workforce shortages, an aging population, and technology advances, the need for skilled, competent ophthalmic technical staff continues to grow, while the number of individuals entering this field are not growing at the same rate.

The Role of the Technician
The role of ophthalmic medical personnel has greatly increased in importance during the last 30 years. The current staffing shortage stems from the increasing role ophthalmic medical personnel play in the medical practice setting while the supply of individuals entering training programs or seeking employment as entry-level assistants, has not kept pace. In the past, ophthalmologists took primary responsibility for all three phases of eye care: (1) assessment/diagnosis, (2) medical/surgical treatment, as well as (3) patient education.

Ophthalmic medical personnel perform much of the evaluative testing and examination essential in providing ophthalmologists with information for effective diagnosis of eye disease and treatment to save vision and restore sight. They now take more significant responsibility for patient education and have an increasing role in many subspecialty areas. Together with ophthalmologists, ophthalmic medical personnel are also actively involved in improving eye care through data collection and research.

New Skills Needed by Ophthalmic Medical Personnel
Ophthalmic medical personnel are increasingly asked to acquire highly specialized knowledge and skills to ensure quality patient care. Based on the input of ophthalmologists, there is an important need to increase the number of ophthalmic medical personnel with specialized skills in advanced subspecialty areas of care. These areas include vision rehabilitation, ophthalmic surgical assisting, contact lenses, eye screening and public health, eye care in developing countries, administrative support and management, vocational and educational rehabilitation, electro physiology and objective testing procedures, newborn and infant vision testing, occupational and industrial ophthalmic technology, ophthalmic ultrasound, and orthoptics.