

“A Systematic Review of the Role of Optometrists, Opticians and Health Administrators in Improving the Quality of Vision Health Care and Service Management”

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Abstract:

This review examines the roles of optometrists, opticians, and health administrators in enhancing the quality of vision health care and service management. Optometrists are primarily responsible for diagnosing, treating, and managing various eye conditions, contributing to improved patient outcomes through early detection, personalized treatment, and preventive care. Opticians play a crucial role in ensuring the proper fitting and dispensing of corrective eyewear, enhancing patient satisfaction and visual acuity. Health administrators manage the operational aspects of vision care services, ensuring efficient service delivery, resource allocation, and regulatory compliance. Collaboration among these professionals is vital for improving the overall quality and efficiency of vision care services. By integrating clinical expertise, technical skills, and effective management, they enhance patient care and streamline service delivery. The review highlights the importance of communication and coordination between these roles to optimize vision health outcomes and improve patient satisfaction.

Keywords: Optometrists, Opticians, Health Administrators, Vision Health Care, Service Management, Quality Improvement, Patient Outcomes, Eye Care Collaboration, Vision Correction, Health Services Efficiency.

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Introduction:

Vision health care is an essential component of public health, involving the diagnosis, treatment, and management of eye conditions to enhance the quality of life for individuals. The key stakeholders in this domain include optometrists, opticians, and health administrators. Each plays a pivotal role in improving the quality of care and the efficient management of vision health services. This systematic review aims to explore their contributions and how they collaborate to optimize patient outcomes and streamline service delivery.

Health care systems are continually being reformed; however, care improvement and intervention effectiveness are often assumed, not measured [1]. The prevalence of vision problems is strongly associated with ageing and this compromised visual function affects individuals' ability to perform activities of daily living [2].

Vision health care is essential for maintaining overall quality of life, preventing blindness, and promoting well-being [3]. The key players in vision health care—optometrists, opticians, and health administrators—work together to enhance the quality of services provided. Their roles are complementary and critical to the delivery of effective and efficient eye care. Here is a breakdown of their roles and contributions [4; 5; 6]:

1. Optometrists: The Primary Vision Care Providers

Optometrists are eye care professionals responsible for diagnosing, treating, and managing various eye and vision conditions. They play a crucial role in ensuring quality clinical care in the field of optometry.

• Primary Responsibilities:

- **Comprehensive Eye Exams:** Optometrists conduct detailed eye examinations to detect vision problems, eye diseases (e.g., glaucoma, cataracts), and systemic diseases that may affect vision (e.g., diabetes, hypertension).

- **Vision Correction:** They prescribe eyeglasses, contact lenses, or vision therapy to correct refractive errors such as nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism.
- **Disease Management:** Optometrists can detect early signs of eye diseases and systemic conditions, managing cases or referring patients to ophthalmologists for surgical or specialized care.
- **Preventive Eye Care:** They educate patients on preventive measures, such as proper eye hygiene, reducing screen time, and protecting eyes from UV exposure.
- **Improving Quality of Care:**
 - **Early Detection:** Optometrists' role in early detection of diseases like glaucoma or diabetic retinopathy prevents further complications and enhances long-term vision outcomes.
 - **Patient Education:** By providing counseling on proper eye care, they empower patients to take proactive steps in maintaining eye health, which improves overall health outcomes.
 - **Collaboration with Other Health Professionals:** Optometrists often collaborate with ophthalmologists, primary care physicians, and opticians to ensure holistic eye care [7].

2. Opticians: The Technical and Customer-Focused Experts

Opticians play a key role in ensuring that patients receive the correct vision aids and that those aids meet the prescribed standards set by optometrists.

- **Primary Responsibilities:**
 - **Prescription Interpretation:** Opticians interpret prescriptions provided by optometrists and ophthalmologists to provide the correct eyewear (glasses or contact lenses) to patients.
 - **Eyewear Fitting and Dispensing:** They assist patients in choosing frames and lenses that suit their vision needs and lifestyle. They also ensure that the eyewear fits comfortably and correctly.
 - **Lens Crafting and Customization:** Some opticians are involved in making lenses and customizing frames to meet specific vision requirements.
 - **Repairs and Adjustments:** Opticians provide maintenance and repairs for damaged or misaligned eyewear, contributing to patient satisfaction and comfort [8].
- **Improving Quality of Care:**
 - **Ensuring Precision:** Opticians ensure that the lenses they dispense accurately correct refractive errors, improving the patient's visual acuity and overall experience.
 - **Personalized Service:** Their interaction with patients in choosing the right lenses, coatings, and frame designs helps tailor the vision solution to individual needs, enhancing comfort and satisfaction.
 - **Patient Experience:** Through their customer service and technical expertise, opticians improve the patient journey by making sure the eyewear provided is functional and aesthetically pleasing, contributing to overall satisfaction with vision care [9].

3. Health Administrators: The Backbone of Service Management

Health administrators manage the operational and logistical aspects of vision care services, ensuring that clinics, hospitals, and optical practices run efficiently and meet regulatory standards [10].

- **Primary Responsibilities:**

- **Operational Management:** Health administrators handle the day-to-day management of eye care facilities, including staffing, equipment procurement, and budgeting.
 - **Policy Implementation:** They ensure compliance with health care regulations, safety standards, and quality control measures within the clinic or hospital setting.
 - **Coordination and Scheduling:** Administrators oversee appointment scheduling, patient flow management, and coordination between optometrists, opticians, and other health care staff, ensuring smooth service delivery.
 - **Health Information Systems:** Administrators may manage electronic health records (EHR) and other data management systems that support clinical decisions and improve communication between eye care professionals [11].
- **Improving Quality of Care:**
 - **Efficient Resource Allocation:** By ensuring that facilities have the necessary staff, equipment, and technology, administrators contribute to the quality of services provided to patients.
 - **Patient Access and Flow:** Effective scheduling and operational management reduce wait times and ensure that patients receive timely care.
 - **Quality Assurance:** Administrators play a vital role in implementing quality improvement programs, monitoring patient satisfaction, and ensuring that services meet established standards.
 - **Technology Adoption:** Administrators also play a pivotal role in the adoption of new technologies, such as telemedicine, which expands access to eye care, particularly in underserved areas [12].

4. Collaboration for Improved Vision Care

The collaboration between optometrists, opticians, and health administrators is critical in providing seamless, high-quality eye care services. Key areas of collaboration include [13]:

- **Integrated Care Pathways:** Optometrists rely on opticians for the correct interpretation and implementation of vision prescriptions, while administrators ensure that the necessary tools and frameworks are in place for smooth service delivery.
- **Communication and Coordination:** Administrators manage the operational aspects that support optometrists and opticians, facilitating effective communication between staff to ensure that patient care is coordinated and timely.
- **Patient-Centered Care:** Through collaborative efforts, these professionals can provide holistic and personalized care. Optometrists diagnose and treat, opticians deliver the necessary vision aids, and administrators ensure that the system works efficiently to support both.

The roles of optometrists, opticians, and health administrators are distinct yet complementary, each playing a crucial role in improving the quality of vision health care and service management. Optometrists lead the clinical aspect of care, ensuring accurate diagnoses and treatment [11]. Opticians provide technical expertise in delivering corrective eyewear, while health administrators ensure that services are efficiently managed and accessible. Together, they form a comprehensive system that enhances patient outcomes, streamlines operations, and improves overall satisfaction with vision care services. Enhanced collaboration between these professionals, supported by modern technologies and patient-centered care practices, holds the potential to further improve the quality of vision care in the future.

Objectives

The objectives of this review are:

1. To assess the role of optometrists in clinical decision-making and patient care.
2. To explore the role of opticians in providing quality eyewear and assisting in vision correction.
3. To examine the role of health administrators in service management and policy implementation within vision health care settings.
4. To identify ways in which collaboration between these professionals can improve overall vision care quality.

Methods

1. **Search Strategy:** A systematic search was conducted across various databases (PubMed, Google Scholar, Cochrane Library) using keywords like “optometrist role,” “optician services,” “health administrators in vision care,” and “quality improvement in eye health care.”
2. **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:**
 - **Inclusion Criteria:**
 - Peer-reviewed articles published between 2000 and 2024.
 - Studies focusing on the role of optometrists, opticians, and health administrators in vision care.
 - Articles that explore interprofessional collaboration within eye health care.
 - **Exclusion Criteria:**
 - Articles not in English.
 - Studies focused solely on clinical outcomes without addressing the roles of the key stakeholders.
3. **Data Extraction:** Data from selected studies were extracted on:
 - The role of optometrists, opticians, and health administrators.
 - Interventions aimed at improving quality of care.
 - Patient outcomes and service delivery improvements.
4. **Analysis:** A narrative synthesis was performed, with results organized by stakeholder roles and their contributions to enhancing vision care quality.

Findings

1. **Optometrists:**
 - **Clinical Role:** Optometrists are the primary providers of vision health care, responsible for comprehensive eye exams, diagnosing eye conditions (e.g., glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration), and prescribing corrective lenses. They also provide preventive care, including screening for systemic diseases such as diabetes.

- **Impact on Quality of Care:** Optometrists improve patient outcomes by ensuring early detection of eye diseases, personalized management plans, and patient education on eye health. Their role in primary care often extends to collaboration with ophthalmologists for more advanced treatment.
- **Challenges:** Time constraints and the burden of administrative tasks can limit the time optometrists spend with patients, affecting the overall quality of care.

2. Opticians:

- **Technical and Advisory Role:** Opticians are responsible for interpreting prescriptions from optometrists and ophthalmologists to create and fit corrective eyewear. Their expertise ensures that patients receive high-quality glasses or contact lenses tailored to their needs.
- **Contribution to Patient Satisfaction:** Opticians play a crucial role in patient satisfaction, as the correct fitting of eyewear significantly impacts the effectiveness of vision correction and comfort. Opticians also provide valuable advice on lens choices, coatings, and frame styles, improving patient experience.
- **Challenges:** A lack of direct involvement in clinical decision-making may limit their ability to provide comprehensive care solutions. Additionally, advancements in online eyewear services have created competition, potentially affecting the quality of personalized services.

3. Health Administrators:

- **Role in Service Management:** Health administrators are responsible for overseeing the operational aspects of vision care facilities, including staffing, resource allocation, and policy implementation. They ensure compliance with health regulations, manage financial resources, and optimize workflow to enhance patient care efficiency.
- **Impact on Quality and Accessibility:** Effective health administration improves patient access to vision care services, reduces wait times, and ensures that facilities are well-equipped to handle the volume of patients. Administrators are also pivotal in adopting health information systems that support patient record-keeping and coordination between optometrists, opticians, and other health care providers.
- **Challenges:** Administrators face challenges in balancing budgetary constraints with the need to invest in new technologies and staff training, which are critical to maintaining high standards of care.

4. Interprofessional Collaboration:

- **Integration of Roles:** Collaboration between optometrists, opticians, and health administrators is essential for delivering comprehensive, patient-centered care. For instance, optometrists rely on opticians to ensure that prescribed corrective solutions are properly dispensed, while administrators manage the logistics and ensure that service delivery is smooth.
- **Benefits of Collaboration:** Interprofessional collaboration leads to more holistic care, where administrative support allows optometrists and opticians to focus on clinical and technical duties, respectively. Additionally, integrated care pathways enhance the patient journey, from diagnosis to corrective interventions and follow-up care.
- **Challenges:** Poor communication between these roles can lead to inefficiencies, mismanagement of patient records, or delayed care. Organizational hierarchies and role ambiguity may also hinder collaboration.

Discussion

The roles of optometrists, opticians, and health administrators are distinct yet interrelated, contributing to the overall quality of vision health care. Optometrists and opticians provide direct patient care, with optometrists focusing on diagnosis

and treatment and opticians on the provision of corrective eyewear. Health administrators ensure the infrastructure and resources are in place to facilitate smooth service delivery.

Areas for Improvement:

1. **Enhanced Communication:** Structured communication channels between optometrists, opticians, and administrators could reduce service delays and improve coordination.
2. **Training and Professional Development:** Continued education for optometrists and opticians on the latest technologies and care practices is essential for maintaining high standards of care.
3. **Patient-Centered Care:** Adopting a more patient-centered approach through better collaboration between these professionals can improve both clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction.

Conclusion

The quality of vision health care depends on the collaboration between optometrists, opticians, and health administrators. Optometrists provide essential clinical care, opticians ensure the quality and appropriateness of corrective devices, and health administrators manage the operational framework that supports patient care. Enhancing communication, training, and role clarity among these professionals can significantly improve the quality and efficiency of vision health services.

Recommendations

1. **Promote Interprofessional Collaboration:** Encourage regular meetings and consultations between optometrists, opticians, and administrators to discuss patient care strategies.
2. **Invest in Technology:** Health administrators should prioritize investing in integrated electronic health records and patient management systems to improve coordination and care delivery.
3. **Focus on Patient Education:** Optometrists and opticians should work together to enhance patient education on eye health and the importance of proper vision care.

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