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SUPPORT FOR HB 2541

OPEN UP FOR PROGRESS

Should a profession be blocked from innovation? And, once innovation has arrived, should it be indefinitely prevented from being used? Doesn't the public look forward to new advancements in all fields? Is it not just expected that professions will persevere in the name of progress.

In our Colleges of Optometry, light management and lasers have been part of our training and research for over 50 years. Yet, in Oregon, we are not able to provide laser procedures for our patients because historically that was deemed not in our "Scope of Practice". Please believe me when I say that after 50 years in practice, 90% of what we do routinely, is more difficult than the safe use of these lasers. It is time to move the "scope" of our profession over to the Oregon Board of Optometry so we can bring more advanced care to the people we serve.

STOP CONTINUAL STATUTE MODIFICATIONS

What if every routine activity and decision of all state professions required legislation? Thank goodness, in the state of Oregon, all of the professions are policed by their Boards. This makes sense because the Boards members consist of professionals along with public members and administrative personnel who handle the day to day issues. Additionally, the Oregon Attorney General provides oversight and legal advice as needed. The Oregon Board of Optometry has embraced this structure for nearly a hundred years. This structure allows the legislature time to focus their decisions on bigger and broader issues. While the Oregon Medical Board oversees the profession of ophthalmologists, the Oregon Board of Optometry oversees the Optometric Physicians. Policing of the two eye care professions is already in place. The beautiful record that the Optometric profession enjoys speaks for itself. Therefore, I submit that the "Scope of Practice" wording in the Oregon Optometry statutes be transferred to the Oregon Board of Optometry. Let the Oregon Board of Optometry continue to determine what the safe "Scope of Practice" should be. In this way, we will not continually be back to the legislature every year for approval of the next innovation.

HELP RURAL AREAS OF OREGON

Most Ophthalmologists are located in metropolitan areas like Portland, Eugene and Medford. However, there are vast areas in Oregon that do not have an ophthalmologist or YAG laser available. I, for one, practice in a small population of one of the underserved Health Counties of Oregon. When I make an appointment for a patient for a YAG laser procedure, it requires the patient to drive 100 miles to get to that office where it is provided. And, it requires two trips because the first trip is just to evaluate the condition. This is often difficult for elderly patients whose vision is already compromised. Travel is a real problem.

The Laser procedure typically takes about 15 minutes. It could have been easily provided in my office. My population is among the oldest in the state so this is a common procedure that could be provided multiple times each month. Previously, I was an Adjunct Professor at Pacific University 23 years ago and taught students how to do these procedures when they graduated to states where it is approved. These procedures are not difficult and not new. These procedures can easily be monitored and regulated by the Oregon Board of Optometry.

It is true that in Portland, there are multiple offices where these procedures can be provided. It is understandable that the Optometric Physicians in Portland might not need this. However, there are vast areas of our large state where we provide needed eye care to rural citizens. We need the use of this tool.

Respectfully,

John B. Rush, OD