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News Release

Contact:

Matt Daigle
(202) 587-5716
media@aao.org

American Academy of Ophthalmology Calls on States to Maintain High Safety Standards for Surgical Eye Care

Nation's eye physicians and surgeons support executive branch's emphasis on patient safety as state lawmakers weigh scope-of-practice expansion

WASHINGTON, D.C. — December 10, 2018 — The [American Academy of Ophthalmology](http://www.aao.org) agrees with important patient safety guidelines recommended in a joint report issued by the three federal agencies that help guide the nation's health care system. The report, authored by the three cabinet secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Treasury, and Labor, focuses on reforms that deliver system-wide cost savings, with significant attention paid to the delivery of care at the state level. One recommendation is that states forego scope-of-practice expansion when legitimate health and safety concerns exist. The Academy's community of 23,000 U.S. ophthalmologists supports this approach.

In ophthalmology, scope-of-practice regulations protect patients from harm during surgery by ensuring that only those with the necessary medical education and clinical training are authorized to perform surgical eye procedures.

The Academy views this recommendation as a clear win for patients and their safety, particularly since it has the endorsement of three cabinet secretaries.

The report's authors recommend that states remove so-called "restrictive" scope-of-practice laws that allegedly "limit provider entry and ability to practice in ways that do not address demonstrable or substantial risks to consumer health and safety." The Academy, which is the nation's leading voice for the profession of ophthalmology on policy issues that affect how medical and surgical eye care is provided in the United States, supports the authors' stated standard of a justified safety regulation to prevent risk of serious harm.

"Too often there is a rush to extend surgical privileges to those who lack the years of medical education and clinical training necessary for understanding and safely performing critical procedures," [Keith D. Carter, M.D., FACS](http://www.aao.org), president of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, said. "It is critical, certainly in eye care, that should our states opt to expand scope of practice, that they eschew any dangerous softening of surgical standards and heed the recommendations in this report by preserving regulations that protect patients seeking surgery and complex medical care of eye disease."

The report's authors further conclude that states should allow all healthcare providers to practice to the top of their license, an approach for which the Academy is generally supportive.

Additionally, the Academy urges Congress and the Trump administration to back federal truth-in-advertising legislation to ensure patients understand their providers' surgical and clinical qualifications.

Such legislation can ensure that patients can "assess quality of care at the time of delivery," as recommended by the report's authors. This can help alleviate documented patient confusion on the qualifications of the myriad eye care providers in each town and state.

About the American Academy of Ophthalmology

The American Academy of Ophthalmology is the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons. A global community of 32,000 medical doctors, we protect sight and empower lives by setting the standards for ophthalmic education and advocating for our patients and the public. We innovate to advance our profession and to ensure the delivery of the highest-quality eye care. Our EyeSmart® program provides the public with the most trusted information about eye health. For more information, visit www.aao.org.

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