Career Exploration Project Paper

To observe the world with the clearest vision, one may find themselves at an optometrist’s office for a check-up. Optometrists are doctors that examine the eyes, diagnose sight problems, and manage/treat eye diseases. There are many different duties of an eye doctor and some that are performed are: “Vision tests and analysis of results, diagnosis of sight problems, such as nearsightedness and farsightedness, and the prescribing of eyeglasses, contacts, and medication” (“Optometrists”). Day to day these doctors interact with people, so developing communication and people skills is necessary in order to be successful and to create a returning customer base.

I personally love interacting with both familiar and unfamiliar people, so communication should be no problem at all. I found my choice in this career after multiple visits to the eye doctor and the enjoyable experiences I had each time. I had always loved sciences and wasn’t to shabby at math, with this, I began to ask my eye doctor how she got to where she was. As she explained, it sounded like a career I would be most interested in. Then during my senior year, I had project that required I do research for a future career, much like this project. It was in that moment that I reached past surface-level definitions of what an optometrist is and looked into all the work it takes to become one.

Like most doctors, optometrists can find themselves in school for up to 8 years. To become an optometrist, one needs a Doctor of Optometry (O.D.) degree. After completing at least 3 years at a college or university, with completed coursework in biology, chemistry,
physics, English, and math, students can apply to one of the 17 accredited programs for those seeking an O.D. in the United States. When applying to Georgia State, I choose the “Biology” major because it fulfilled all requirements that I would need and happened to one of my favorite sectors of science. In addition to applying to an O.D school, “Applicants must also take the Optometry Admission Test (OAT)” (“Optometry”). The OAT tests applicants in the subject areas of physics, science, quantitative reasoning, and reading comprehension. Once accepted, the academic program will last for 4 years and consist of both classroom learning and hands-on clinical experience. Upon earning the Doctor of Optometry degree, some optometrists go on to complete 1 year of residency for additional experience in the field.

Now that one has completed all their schooling, it’s on to the work force. In order to work as an optometrist, a licence to practice from the American Board of Optometry needs to be obtained by passing the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBRO) examinations. The results of this test will determine if one is granted by the state, in which they are planning to work in, their licence. If an optometrist is looking to demonstrate their complete commitment to keeping updated with new developments, reviewing all that they’ve learned in school, and providing exquisite quality for patient care, they should earn an American Board of Optometry Board Certification and Maintenance of Certification. With this, an optometrist will have to participate “in an extensive process that involves approved education, computer assessments, practice improvement exercises and periodic exams to demonstrate competence” (“What is American Board of Optometry Board Certification?”).
A majority of optometrists are employed at stand-alone offices of optometry, but may also work at doctors’ offices, chain retail stores (ie. America’s Best), and in many more industries. After a few years of experience, quite a few optometrists find themselves starting their own private practice and shifting their attention to the business aspects of running their own company. The average starting salary of an entry-level optometrist is around $95,102 and only increases with experience and area of employment. Those who have a few years tucked under their belt and own their own practice could be earning over $187,000 annually. How much one makes is definitely affected by where they live. According to the United States Department of Labor Employment Statistics for Optometry, optometrists make the most in the states of Alaska, Connecticut, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Maryland and the least in the states of Nevada, Alabama, Illinois, and South Carolina. Considering my current state of Georgia, residents here who work as Optometrist fall on the lower end of the scale when it comes to income, earning an average of $105,870 annually.

Being an optometrist, you have to constantly state on top of the latest developments and techniques. They make the job look simple but really, they will keep testing for the rest of their career. You’d have to constantly stay on top of your certifications and make sure you’re valid for everything. With the non-stop lifestyle of testing and keeping up-to-date, I was concerned it could become too much for me. But I’ve learned how much I love to learn and educate myself, so I don’t fear what’s to come in my future career as an optometrist. Other careers in the world of optometry, include Ophthalmologists, who complete the same daily routines as optometrists but
are certified eye doctors who can complete major surgeries on patients. Another option would be would be an Optician, these employees fit patients for their eyeglasses using a given prescription.

In conjunction with having a doctor title and earning a reasonable paycheck, being an eye doctor has its benefits. Optometrists work 9 to 5 jobs that typically require little to no overtime, therefore leaving time for socializing with family and friends. Paperwork? It’s usually left at the office and doesn’t require extra work after one’s clocked out. Optometry would be a great career for me because I would be able to combine my love for math, science, and people in a job where I can earn money, come home for dinner, and raise a family at the same time.

Works Cited

