ABSTRACT

The Pediatric/Vision Therapy Residency at The Eye Institute of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Salus University was established in 1977, one of the first in the country. It is a challenging 54-week educational program that is designed to train entry-level graduate optometrists to provide competent and efficient care to pediatric and infant populations, and vision therapy to both children and adults.

One of the biggest attractors to PCO is its exceptionally strong clinical program. From day one, residents get invaluable experience with our diverse patient population. The Pediatric/Vision Therapy Residency provides the foundation for the management of binocular disorders, strabismus, traumatic brain injuries, learning related vision problems, and vision therapy. Additionally, our Pediatric/Vision Therapy residents have the opportunity to enhance their skills in the diagnosis and management of ocular disease through our specialty services, such as emergency eye care, neuro-optometry, and retina service. The science and research driven atmosphere provides a unique learning and teaching opportunity for the residents as they work closely with faculty and students in the clinic.

The Pediatric/Vision Therapy Residency at PCO is a comprehensive program that assiduously prepares residents for the field of pediatrics and vision therapy, employing an appropriate level of supervision and support from highly trained faculty, and eventually leading residents to clinical independence. With the re-opening of The Eye Institute in May 2011 and the addition of 14,000 square feet of clinic education space, it has never been a more exciting time for residents at this institution.

SUMMARY

PCO fills two spots annually for the Pediatric/Vision Therapy Residency. The mission of the Residency in Pediatric Optometry/Vision Therapy is to:

• Train the entry level graduate optometrist to provide competent and efficient care to routine pediatric and infant patient
• Prepare the residents to competently diagnose and manage:
  - Accommodative and non-strabismic binocular vision disorders
  - Strabismus and amblyopia
  - Learning related vision problems
  - Vision problems associated with acquired brain injury
  - Ocular disease in the pediatric population
  - Emergency eye injuries in patients of all ages
• Provide an orientation and didactic program throughout the year; to promote development of skills as an educator and self-learner; and to provide a suitable environment in which the resident can flourish.

Primary Care Pediatrics:

Residents are assigned to the Pediatrics and Binocular Vision Service at The Eye Institute to provide direct care to patients and to supervise optometry students in the examination and management of children and infants with various vision conditions.

Binocular Vision Service:

During binocular vision evaluations, residents enhance their skills in the performance and interpretation of tests to evaluate and treat binocular vision, accommodation, and ocular motility disorders. When examining patients with strabismus and amblyopia, residents learn advanced diagnostic and treatment procedures including objective and subjective assessments of comitancy, anomalous correspondence, suppression, eccentric fixation, accommodation, and eye movement ability.

Visual Information Processing Evaluation:

Residents learn to perform a visual information processing evaluations, which include an assessment of visual spatial skills, visual analysis skills, visual motor-integration skills, attention and concentration, intelligence (screening), and reading skills (screening).

Vision Therapy:

On average, residents manage approximately 15 vision therapy patients weekly. Residents are not only exposed to a variety of therapy techniques, but they also develop the skills to independently plan and implement vision therapy for patients with accommodative, binocular vision, and ocular motility disorders, as well as learning related vision disorders and disorders resulting from traumatic brain injuries.

Brain Injury Clinic:

In this service, residents develop the knowledge and skills necessary to evaluate, diagnose, and manage patients with vision disorders secondary to head trauma and stroke. They provide direct care to patients with these conditions under the supervision of experienced clinical faculty at The Eye Institute and Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital. The Eye Institute has seen an increasing number of patients with acquired brain injuries every month. Health care providers at hospitals and clinics throughout the greater Philadelphia area refer both pediatric and adult patients to our clinic.

Specialty Service:

These services enable residents to diagnose and manage ocular disease outside of the pediatric department. They have the choice of rotating through emergency, retina, neuro-optometry, and anterior segment services. In these services, they have the opportunity to work alongside specialty optometrists and ophthalmologists to enhance their ability to co-manage secondary and tertiary care patients through inter-disciplinary consultation and referral.

The residents are assigned to emergency service both as a direct provider and as a supervisor of optometry interns, to triage and see patients presenting with urgent eye care needs. The resident will also be on call 4-5 weeks during the year to provide direct care to patients presenting with urgent eye care needs when The Eye Institute is closed.

CONCLUSION

The diverse nature of the patient population at The Eye Institute of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Salus University provides the foundation for residents to develop their existing skills to an advanced level and to cultivate new skills and knowledge. Graduates of this program develop the skills necessary to become leaders in the field of pediatric optometry and vision therapy, offer vision therapy in clinical practice, and hopefully continue to promote and contribute to the optometric field, both through research and as optometric educators.