Results of the Ophthalmic Photographers' Society's 25th Anniversary Professional Survey

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Abstract: In the spring of 1994, the Board of Directors of the Ophthalmic Photographers' Society sanctioned a survey for its active members. By carrying out this project, they hoped to answer questions about the demographics of the Society and to explore several issues about the nature of the profession of ophthalmic photography. The timing of the project coincided with the Society's 25th Anniversary.

Introduction

This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the Ophthalmic Photographers' Society. As the Society has grown in size and complexity, the need to understand the makeup of its members has grown commensurately. Although the OPS has obviously undergone some change in demographics since the charter members banded together and formed the Society in 1969, the Board of Directors wanted to quantify these changes.

We designed the survey to yield data that would be useful to the three major components of the Society: education, certification, and publications. The Board of Education requires demographic data to assist in planning its educational meetings, and such data might be useful in identifying future venues and targeting audiences for such conferences. The Board of Certification has the need for anticipating the future demand for its CRA and COPRA testing and recertification activities, and such information could be used to help market these programs. To attract new advertisers, The Journal of Ophthalmic Photography needs to know the extent of our members' influence concerning the purchase of equipment and supplies. Such information could also prove advantageous to the administration of the Society, and major decisions that influence the financial well-being and responsiveness of the OPS, including the creation of a central office, could be more confidently undertaken by knowing this information.

Materials and Methods

After receiving preliminary Board of Directors (BOD) approval to undertake this project, I designed a first draft of the questionnaire and sent it for review to several key members of the Society, including current representatives and past members of the Boards of Certification, Education, and Directors. From the outset, the questionnaire was intended to yield maximal information for each board, while avoiding a lengthy or too complicated format.

After receiving suggestions for changes, the second draft was designed and presented to the BOD for final approval. The second version incorporated several minor changes and clarifications. One major change between the two drafts was the decision to omit all questions about members' salaries. Although individual members have asked the OPS to conduct a formal salary survey, the BOD felt that sanctioning such a survey and divulging the results could be injurious to certain members whose salaries were well above average. By adopting the dictum "first, do no harm" from the Hippocratic Oath, the BOD thus hoped to defuse a potentially controversial matter.

The survey was sent to the membership as part of the regular OPS Newsletter mailing, since this would be cost-effective and would reach every dues-paid member. Because the OPS is an international organization,
there was no simple way to send the surveys with pre-paid return postage. This may have caused a decrease in the total number of replies.

**Results**

When the survey was mailed in the Spring of 1994, the Ophthalmic Photographers’ Society had a total of 1,035 members. Member classifications were as follows:

- 1,008 active members
- 10 sustaining members
- 17 honorary members

Although the survey stipulated a May 1st deadline, I extended the closure until June 1st to allow the maximal number of responses to be returned. As of June 1, 1994, I received 113 responses. This represents a response rate of 11%.

The following charts, graphs and written information details the response to each question. **Note:** When a number is expressed as a percentage, this indicates the result of the computation of responses divided by 113. When written without the percentage symbol, however, the number represents the total number of responses to that question.

### Personal Information

**Figure 1**

**Location of Practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population of City:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23% 250,000 - 1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24% 50,000 - 250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16% &lt; 50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% unspecified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Educational Background

**Figure 4**

**Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Professional Training

You initially learned the craft of ophthalmic photography from:

- 54% A photographer in department
- 19% Employing ophthalmologist
- 8% Self taught
- 7% OPS courses
- 6% Independent courses
- 3% University courses
- 3% Photo training programs

You attend continuing education courses in ophthalmic photography:

- 39% Ever year
- 22% Every other year
- 19% More than once yearly
- 16% Occasionally
- 3% Never
- 1% Unspecified
Employment History

Figure 5

Nature of Employment Setting

Figure 6

Number of positions held:
- 45% One
- 26% Two
- 8% Three
- 7% Four
- 3% Five
- 3% Six
- 3% Others
- 3% Unspecified

Nature of Employment Setting

Figure 6

Size of the photographic department where you work:
- 37% One person service
- 63% Multiple person service

Years in present position:
- 55% > Five years
- 14% Five years
- 12% Four years
- 7% Three years
- 6% Two years
- 6% < One year

Typical length of work week:
- 5% > 50 hours
- 46% 45-50 hours
- 38% 35-40 hours
- 6% 25-30 hours
- 4% 15-20 hours
- 1% < 15 hours

Is overtime compulsory?
- 33% yes
- 31% no
- 36% unspecified

Your exact title:
- Ophthalmic photographer: 36
- Ophthalmic technician: 17
- Chief photographer: 6
- Clinic supervisor: 6
- Retinal angiographer: 5
- Department manager: 5
- Other titles: 38

Your position is considered to be a:
- 42% Technical position
- 23% Staff position
- 23% Supervisory
- 5% Consultant
- 4% Faculty
- 3% Unspecified

Current Photographic Responsibilities

- 89% Fundus photography
- 82% Fluorescein angiograms
- 67% Processing film
- 65% External ocular photography
- 50% Training
- 48% Slit-lamp biomicrography
- 42% Close-up photography
- 40% Copywork
- 31% Surgical photography
- 28% Specular microscopy
- 28% Audio-visual support
- 27% Goniography
- 26% Public relations photography
- 19% Corneal topography
- 19% Computer slides
- 18% Videography
- 12% ICG angiograms
- 8% Other
- 6% Photomicrography

Media Utilization

Figure 7
Other Services

In your current position you also perform the following non-photographic service:

- 52% Vision testing
- 49% History taking
- 47% Ultrasonography
- 47% Filing
- 43% Tonometry
- 42% Administration
- 39% Education coordination
- 39% Color vision testing
- 35% Visual fields testing
- 33% Maintenance/janitorial
- 29% Patient registration
- 27% Study coordination
- 26% Refracting
- 18% Surgical assisting
- 16% Billing
- 13% Secretarial
- 11% Other
- 9% Electrophysiology

You personally have the following influence on deciding equipment and supplies purchases for the photographic service:

- 35% Complete control
- 62% Provide recommendations
- 2% No say
- 1% Unspecified

Have you taught ophthalmic photography to others?

- 88% yes
- 12% no

If yes, for whom:

- Your institution 86
- For a non-profit organization 45
- For yourself for a profit 23
- For someone else, for profit 22

Specify what subjects you teach in ophthalmic photography:

(Author's note: wording to suggest fundus photography and fluorescein angiography were reported most often. However, due to variations in terminology, meaningful statistics could not be generated from this "fill in the blank" formatted question.)

Certification

You have obtained the following licensure and/or certification:

- CRA 63
- COA 16
- RN 3
- RBP 2
- None 26

- COT 22
- COMT 8
- LPN 2
- COPRA 1

Are you planning to obtain certification in the future?

- 41% yes
- 29% no
- 30% unspecified

Are you currently certified by any multi-center studies?

- 60% no
- 36% yes
- 4% unspecified

Professional Affiliations

In addition to the OPS, to what other professional organizations do you belong?

- ATPO 20
- BPA 16
- ASORN 3
- AACO 1
- ASOU 1
- AAO 3
- None 56

Patient Encounters and Film Utilization

During an average week you photograph the following number of patients: 42

In one week, you typically expose the following number of 36-exposure rolls of film:

- Black/white 21.6
- Color 18.2

In one week you produce the following average number of electronic images: 264

Reason for OPS Membership

What motivated you to join the Ophthalmic Photographers’ Society?

- 88% Educational offerings
- 69% Networking opportunities
- 65% Certification
- 63% Society publications
- 14% Develop speaking and leadership skills
- 14% Social events
- 3% Other

Discussion

The data obtained from this study suggests that the average OPS member who responded to the survey has evolved over the past 25 years into someone with a broad base of skills and responsibilities. Although the charter members of this organization were primarily medical photographers who specialized in ophthalmic subjects, it seems that today’s members have expanded their repertoire to include a variety of other tasks, many of which do not fall within the traditional sphere of pure photography. As technology continues its rapid advance in the field of ophthalmology, OPS members may increasingly take on new and innovative forms of documenting the eye.

Although the statistics reported in this paper were gleaned from a significant sample, the reader should remember that only about a tenth of the members responded. Without further analysis of the sample, it is uncertain whether a particular type of member was more inclined to respond than others with different backgrounds or inclinations. Nonetheless, this survey should be a useful tool to discover large trends in the demographics of the Society.