



WHO IS A PAEDIATRIC OPHTHALMOLOGIST / STRABISMOLOGIST?

WSPOS Ethics Bureau

The Ethics Bureau was asked by the WSPOS Executive Committee to propose a set of minimal standards and ethics guidelines to define criteria for individuals to be labelled as paediatric ophthalmologists / strabismologists. These would be considered a guide for ethical behavior rather than a process of accreditation, approval, or certification. The objective of this process is to ultimately inform patients and physicians and ensure that care for children as well as adults and children with strabismus is being delivered optimally.

Paediatric ophthalmology and strabismus is a recognized subspecialty of ophthalmology. In its most complete form, the specialty encompasses the care of a wide array of eye problems in children as well as strabismus in adults. There is often an overlap of adult and children strabismus service. However, in some settings, general/comprehensive ophthalmologists may also care for children. Also, in some settings, strabismus and certain subspecialty childhood eye problems may be delegated to adult eye subspecialists with special interest and experience (e.g. cornea, glaucoma). We also recognize that in some areas of the world, the disciplines of paediatric ophthalmology and strabismus are considered separate.

We believe it is important to have a common understanding of what constitutes true paediatric ophthalmology and/or strabismus specialty care so as to ensure that patients and physicians have an understanding of the qualifications and training that they can expect to be represented by individuals who deliver such care as their designated specialty practice. Such definitions may also be useful to institutions/practices that seek to employ ophthalmologists in these designated specialty areas.

In considering this subject, the authors recognize the following

- Different countries have different certification requirements; subspecialty or board examinations may or may not be required.
- Training programs :
 - ❖ Some may require formal accreditation or (as in the USA) approval by regulatory bodies.
 - ❖ Some training programs are informal apprenticeships without regulatory oversight.
 - ❖ There is a difference between observerships and hand-on (including surgery) training.
 - ❖ Training programs and observerships may have varying lengths and requirements.
- Ethical issues may be impacted by country specific regulations, resources and culture.
- There must be a balance between behavior (what one does), culture, and minimum competencies.
- Some settings require non-trained people to practice paediatric ophthalmology otherwise paediatric/strabismus care could not be delivered there.
- Cumulative training, experience and exposure may or may not “equal” a formal fellowship.

The Ethics Bureau listed the following as Minimum requirements:

1. 1-year cumulative hands-on concentrated training in paediatric ophthalmology and strabismus, including hands-on surgery experience, with a defined minimum curriculum (e.g. categories as in AAPOS/AUPO, EBO, ICO criteria)
2. Ability to perform full paediatric ophthalmology and strabismus examination including obtaining (or delegating) cycloplegic refraction and carrying out indirect ophthalmoscopy
3. Adhere to basic ethical principle of not performing duties and skills outside the individual's own comfort zone even if required to do so in a given setting
4. Regular performance of paediatric ophthalmology/strabismus activities as a significant portion (>50%) of workload and engaging in continuing education and maintenance of competencies

In regions where there is need, WSPOS or other professional organizations can help facilitate gap filling through educational programs to strengthen paediatric ophthalmology services.

Respectfully submitted October 28, 2018,

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