

**ALL ABOUT RESIDENCIES: A SURVEY OF PAST RESIDENTS
FROM THE MICHIGAN COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY**

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FROM THE MICHIGAN COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY**

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ABSTRACT

Background: There have been a limited number of surveys of past optometric residents and there have been none specific to past residents from the Michigan College of Optometry (MCO). This survey was designed to gather a broad array of data about residents and the residency programs they completed in an effort to educate and inform current and future MCO students who may be interested in completing a post-graduate residency program. *Methods:* MCO graduates who have completed a residency program were contacted via e-mail and asked to complete an online survey; the link to the survey was available in the e-mail. *Results:* The surveys were tallied, revealing valuable information about residency programs. *Conclusions:* The data was compiled so many aspects of residencies can easily be accessed by current and future MCO students or other interested parties.

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Introduction:

In an effort to acquire a variety of information about the outcomes of residencies, according to the former residents who completed the programs, an online survey was conducted. The survey questions were quite diverse in order to obtain information about many aspects of the residency experience.

Methods:

An online survey was created through www.zoomerang.com, a free online tool for creating, managing and analyzing surveys. A series of questions regarding many aspects of residencies was written by the student intern involved in this project, and those questions were edited by the intern's advisor.

A list of former residents from MCO was compiled through two methods. First, the information about a number of former residents had already been stored at MCO on a computer database. This information was easily accessed. Secondly, the Associate Dean of MCO was able to assist in recalling a number of other past residents who had not been entered into the database. The e-mail addresses of all of these identified past residents was gathered with the help of Ferris State University's Alumni Relations Office.

Altogether, 54 former residents were identified. E-mail addresses were found for 35 of these 54 people. Invitations to complete the online survey were sent via e-mail to these 35 former residents from MCO; unfortunately, only 27 of those e-mails were successfully sent due to some of the acquired e-mail addresses being invalid.

From the 27 successful e-mails sent, 22 completed surveys resulted. The surveys were completed on an anonymous basis, so it cannot be determined which former residents completed the surveys. The answers to the survey were tabulated and analyzed.

Survey:

The survey was composed of twenty questions which explored different aspects of the residency experience, along with the demographics of those who completed the survey. The entire survey is as follows (note that the format was slightly different in the online version that the survey-takers completed):

**Michigan College of Optometry
Survey of Former Residents**

Thank you for your participation in this short survey. Your honest answers will allow us to learn more about the benefits of completing a residency.

1. Please check the appropriate box: Male Female

2. What was your marital status when you began your residency?
 Single Married Other _____

3. When did you *initially* learn about residencies?
 Before optometry school
 Optometry school, Year 1
 Optometry school, Year 2
 Optometry school, Year 3
 Optometry school, Year 4
 After Graduation
 Other _____

4. From whom did you initially learn about residencies?
 Faculty
 Fellow Student
 Current Resident
 Former Resident
 Other _____

5. What was the primary method by which you heard about residency programs?
 Word-of-mouth Residency pamphlet
 "Residency Day" at MCO MCO Website
 Bulletin board at MCO Other _____

6. What type of residency did you complete?
 Ocular Disease Cornea & Contact Lens Primary Care
 Family Practice Pediatrics Geriatrics
 Low Vision Vision Therapy Community Health
 Refractive & Ocular Surgery

7. Was your residency program affiliated with the Michigan College of Optometry?
 Yes No

8. Please check the most appropriate box:
 I got my first choice for residency type (eg: Pediatrics, PC, etc.) and location.
 I got the residency type that I wanted, but not the location that I wanted.
 I did not get the residency type that I wanted, so I did another type instead.
 Other _____

9. What was the primary reason for selecting the residency program you did?
- The type of residency (e.g. ocular disease, pediatrics, primary care, etc.)
 - The geographical location of the residency program
 - The faculty at the residency program
 - Potential for employment at that location
 - It was the only program that offered me a residency position
 - Other _____

10. Why did you decide to complete a residency (check all that apply)?
- To gain better clinical skills
 - To make you more marketable/competitive for desired job
 - To delay making alternate practice plans
 - Prestige
 - Sense of accomplishment
 - Other _____

11. What were some advantages of completing a residency (check all that apply)?
- Residency program faculty to “double check” patients when requested
 - Getting student loans deferred during that year
 - Post-residency job opportunities
 - Large patient volume
 - Salaried position
 - Other _____

12. What were some disadvantages of completing a residency (check all that apply)?
- Low income during that year
 - Lack of employee benefits from the residency program
 - Passing up other employment opportunities in order to complete a residency
 - Lack of clinical independence
 - Other _____

13. In what setting do you now practice optometry (check any that apply)?
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private Practice, Sole OD | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Practice, Partnership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private Practice, Group | <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Setting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> Work for an Ophthalmologist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans Affairs | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Health Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indian Health Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work for an Optometrist | |

14. Please tell us the contributions that you have made to the profession, or other accomplishments, since your residency (check all that apply).
- Article(s) published
 - Textbook(s) published
 - Served on a MOA (or other state association) committee

- Served on an AOA committee
- Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry
- Diplomate of the American Academy of Optometry
- Fellow of the College of Optometrists in Vision Development
- Other _____

15. Do you feel that post-graduate residency training should be required?

- Yes No Undecided

16. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements where “1” is Strongly Disagree (SD) and “10” is Strongly Agree (SA).

	SD										SA
Overall, I am glad I completed a residency after graduation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
I was accepted to the residency program that I really wanted.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
The benefits of completing a residency were worth the year of lower income.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
I use the specific skills I learned during my residency on a daily basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
I now practice in a setting that <i>requires</i> the specific skills I learned during my residency.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Overall, I had a positive experience with my residency supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
If I could do it over again, I would again complete a residency program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
I would recommend that others consider completing a residency program.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
I would recommend the specific residency that I completed to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
There should be more information about residencies given to optometry students to raise their awareness.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
The benefits of my residency outweighed the disadvantages.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

17. Please comment about your overall residency experience:

18. Please note any other benefits you have experienced from completing a residency:

19. Please note any other disadvantages you experienced during your residency.

20. Please note any additional comments here:

Thank you for your time! Your input is greatly appreciated!

Results:

The tabulated results of the survey are as follows. Please note that under “Other responses” the respondents’ answers were left unchanged from their original form (i.e. they appear here exactly as written by the respondent on the online survey), and they have been reported in the chronological order in which the survey results were received.

1. Please check the appropriate box:

Male		9	41%
Female		13	59%
Total		22	100%

2. What was your marital status when you began your residency?

Single		13	59%
Married		9	41%
Other		0	0%
Total		22	100%

3. When did you *initially* learn about residencies?

Before optometry school		3	14%
Optometry school, Year 1		10	45%
Optometry school, Year 2		2	9%
Optometry school, Year 3		7	32%
Optometry school, Year 4		0	0%
After Graduation		0	0%
Other		0	0%
Total		22	100%






4. From whom did you initially learn about residencies?

Faculty		17	77%
Fellow Student		1	5%
Current Resident		2	9%
Former Resident		3	14%
Other		3	14%

Other responses:

- a. don't remember
- b. I don't remember
- c. general knowledge - no specific source







5. What was the primary method by which you heard about residency programs?

Word-of-mouth		12	55%
"Residency Day" at MCO		5	23%
Bulletin board at MCO		0	0%
Residency pamphlet		2	9%
MCO Website		0	0%
Other		3	14%
Total		22	100%

Other responses:

- a. ASCO Website
- b. Residency info at Academy meeting
- c. Faculty


6. What type of residency did you complete?

Ocular Disease		6	27%
Cornea & Contact Lens		6	27%
Primary Care		4	18%
Family Practice		2	9%
Pediatrics		4	18%
Geriatrics		0	0%
Low Vision		0	0%
Vision Therapy		0	0%
Community Health		0	0%
Refractive & Ocular Surgery		0	0%
Total		22	100%







7. Was your residency program affiliated with the Michigan College of Optometry?

Yes		4	18%
No		18	82%
Total		22	100%

8. Please check the most appropriate box:

I got my first choice for residency type (eg: Pediatrics, PC, etc.) and location.		18	82%
I got the residency type that I wanted, but not the location that I wanted.		1	5%
I did not get the residency type that I wanted, so I did another type instead.		3	14%
Other		0	0%
Total		22	100%





9. What was the primary reason for selecting the residency program you did?

The type of residency (e.g. ocular disease, pediatrics, primary care, etc.)		14	64%
The geographical location of the residency program		2	9%
The faculty at the residency program		2	9%
Potential for employment at that location		0	0%
It was the only program that offered me a residency position		1	5%
Other		3	14%
Total		22	100%

Other responses:

- a. Gaining skills not available at other sites
- b. It had a combined MS program
- c. combination program with Master's degree





10. Why did you decide to complete a residency (check all that apply)?



To gain better clinical skills		11	50%
To make you more marketable/competitive for desired job		9	41%
To delay making alternate practice plans		0	0%
Prestige		0	0%
Sense of accomplishment		1	5%
Other		4	18%

Other responses:

- a. better skills, marketable, wanted to teach
- b. desire to learn specialty contact lenses
- c. To pursue more research and clinical experience
- d. to familiarize myself with the area where I wanted to practice.

11. What were some advantages of completing a residency (check all that apply)?






Residency program faculty to "double check" patients when requested		11	50%
Getting student loans deferred during that year		7	32%
Post-residency job opportunities		22	100%
Large patient volume		10	45%

Salaried position		3	14%
Other		9	41%

Other responses:

- a. Many difficult cases, more comfy in practice now
- b. increased overall clinical knowledge exponentially
- c. quality of patient encounters
- d. Easy to become FAAO, excellent clinical decisions
- e. academic opportunities (posters, points for FAAO)
- f. amount of networking I was able to do
- g. different academic environment and responsibility level
- h. teaching opportunity, more comfortable with emergency patients and difficult cases
- i. Confidence










12. What were some disadvantages of completing a residency (check all that apply)?

Low income during that year		18	82%
Lack of employee benefits from the residency program		2	9%
Passing up other employment opportunities in order to complete a residency		2	9%
Lack of clinical independence		1	5%
Other		3	14%





Other responses:


- a. long hours, scut work
- b. I feel there were no disadvantages
- c. None whatsoever

13. In what setting do you now practice optometry (check any that apply)?

Private Practice, Sole OD		4	18%
Private Practice, Partnership		3	14%
Private Practice, Group		3	14%
Academic Setting		5	23%
Commercial		4	18%
Work for an Optometrist		4	18%
Work for an Ophthalmologist		4	18%
Veterans Affairs		2	9%
Community Health Center		1	5%
Indian Health Service		0	0%
Other		0	0%

14. Please tell us the contributions that you have made to the profession, or other accomplishments, since your residency (check all that apply).





Article(s) published		7	37%
Textbook(s) published		0	0%
Served on a MOA (or other state association) committee		8	42%
Served on an AOA committee		1	5%
Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry		11	58%

Diplomate of the American Academy of Optometry		0	0%
Fellow of the College of Optometrists in Vision Development		0	0%
Other		8	42%

Other responses:

- a. Adjunct Faculty at ICO, NOVA, NECO; Extern Super.
- b. MOA & SWMOS Pres, set up TLC residency
- c. MS degree, taught for 2.5 yrs
- d. Published posters AOA and SECO
- e. None
- f. Lectured at AAO meeting
- g. Educational Workshop Instructor
- h. taught in optometry for 2.5 yrs

15. Do you feel that post-graduate residency training should be required?

Yes		3	14%
No		17	77%
Undecided		2	9%
Total		22	100%

16. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements where “1” is Strongly Disagree and “10” is Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree									Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overall, I am glad I completed a residency after graduation.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5%	2 9%	19 86%
I was accepted to the residency program that I really wanted.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5%	0 0%	2 9%	1 5%	2 9%	16 73%
The benefits of	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	16

completing a residency were worth the year of lower income.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	18%	73%
I use the specific skills I learned during my residency on a daily basis.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 9%	1 5%	2 9%	17 77%
I now practice in a setting that <i>requires</i> the specific skills I learned during my residency.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5%	1 5%	2 9%	3 14%	4 18%	11 50%
Overall, I had a positive experience with my residency supervisor.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	3 14%	4 18%	15 68%
If I could do it over again, I would again complete a residency program.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5%	21 95%
I would recommend that others consider completing a residency program.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5%	2 9%	19 86%
I would recommend the specific residency that I completed to others.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5%	2 9%	2 9%	17 77%
There should be more information about residencies given to optometry students to raise their awareness.	1 5%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 9%	1 5%	1 5%	5 23%	3 14%	9 41%
The benefits of my residency outweighed the disadvantages.	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5%	1 5%	3 14%	17 77%

(Note: Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.)

17. Please comment about your overall residency experience:

- a. PCO primary care residency gave a huge variety of experiences that made it much easier to deal with patients in everyday practice. Awesome faculty there, great experience, especially working with 13 other residents.
- b. fantastic - great year of clinical experience unmatched during my fourth year.
- c. Invaluable to my career.

- d. It was great and it is the only reason that I am working in a wonderful disease based ophthalmology practice.
- e. Residency went well, but being a first combined Ped/MS had some bumps - more with the MS and combining schedules.
- f. I didn't know how much I didn't know about ocular disease until I finished this residency. Overall it was the smartest decision I made in my optometric career thus far
- g. Gained clinical skills and confidence, but did not have a large patient load.
- h. I truly enjoyed my residency experience. It opened doors for me that would not have been opened otherwise. I enjoyed the program and the people I worked with.
- i. It was great, beneficial to my career in many ways
- j. I applied to 3 different residency programs and didn't match in the initial process. I received two offers from programs that didn't match during the process. Although I didn't get my top picks I would still highly recommend students considering residency training.
- k. Great, would do it over again if I could
- l. 100% positive and useful experience. No real downside.
- m. Excellent - I am a better doctor because of my experience and it will pay dividends in the future.
- n. Although being away from my spouse made my residency tough, it was worth it. It was a very difficult and stressful year, but I will always have the skills I acquired and be able to use them to advance my profession and serve patients better. I have greatly expanded the RGP use in the practice I work in and have had

the chance to change the lives of people who couldn't see before. It is very rewarding. If I hadn't done this residency I would not have been able to help these people.

- o. In some ways I was controlled too much and then expected to have too much responsibility in others. It was uneven in that respect, but I had a wonderful variety of experiences that I would not have gotten anywhere else.
- p. PCO faculty were amazing, very helpful. Camaraderie with 13 other residents made it very fun and fulfilling.
- q. My residency experience was amazing. When I first completed optometry school, I did not feel I had all the skills and knowledge needed to properly manage patients. There were many types of patients I had not been exposed to while doing my fourth year clinical rotations and I felt uncomfortable treating and managing these types of patients. When I did my rotation at the VA, I realized how much knowledge I was still lacking. It was my final rotation and it really made me look into doing a residency. I am forever grateful for doing my residency. Not only was I exposed to a lot of pathology, I also learned to manage patients, perform specific diagnostic tests, order lab tests and make appropriate referrals. Here is what a residency teaches you, on top of becoming comfortable with managing many different types of patients and increasing knowledge in specific areas of the residency program,....it teaches you to think differently. Even if you don't know what you're looking at, you are taught to go through an entire thought process to figure it out on your own, or at least have done all that you can do, and then make the appropriate referral. With the continuing growth of the scope of our practice,

it is our responsibility to manage patients with the highest standard of care....this is what I feel a residency did for me. I feel confident with every decision I make, whether it be a treatment modality vs. a referral vs. ordering specific testing.

While a residency is very challenging, it teaches you skills that, not only benefit you in clinic and professionally, but also personally and in your private life. It is definitely worth the sacrifice for a year because the knowledge gained is invaluable. I am forever grateful to my residency program, the time and the dedication of my residency directors, and the overall experience. If you go into a program, staying positive and trying your best, you will get the most out of the experience that is possible.

18. Please note any other benefits you have experienced from completing a residency:
- a. competency to take on any ocular anomaly and handle it with quality care
 - b. Source of referrals from other medical professions as well as optometry itself for my specialty.
 - c. In addition to the clinical skills, I have greatly enjoyed the relationships I developed with faculty, other residents, and students. I keep in touch with a number of them.
 - d. The overall friendships made with other residents at the same residency
 - e. Extra networking, rotations with area specialists, opportunities to improve teaching skills, health insurance/travel benefits, ability to work before licensure was complete, and a job offer :)
 - f. It helped me in pursuing AAO Fellowship. It broadened my perspective and understanding in many areas of optometry.

- g. Make connections with other residents and leaders in the profession.
 - h. Teaching experience.
 - i. confidence with difficult patients, made contacts with other important professionals nationwide
 - j. Relationships developed within the profession.
 - k. I was able to travel an extensive amount during my residency and have created a large network of contacts throughout the country who one day may lead to a better job.
 - l. In addition to the varied pt experience, there was the further exposure to academia. There is a whole different view of it as a student, as a resident, and as an instructor.
 - m. I feel extremely confident in the way I manage my patients. I know that I have the skills necessary to provide the best patient care possible, especially with our expanding scope of practice. I also have learned to appreciate the academic side of optometry. I find myself more involved with the American Academy of Optometry than I probably would have been had I not done a residency. I learned to appreciate reading case reviews, studies, and journals as well. I am very respected by the ophthalmologists that I work with and have a great working relationship with them. I feel I am very respected and the doctors I work with know that I am managing patients appropriately.
19. Please note any other disadvantages you experienced during your residency.
- a. None

- b. We were not given that much independence at the time. I think the program has altered since and the residents are more respected.
- c. none
- d. Worked evenings and weekends.
- e. I moved far away from home.
- f. NONE
- g. none
- h. It was very stressful because of the on-call policy at my location. I was not made fully aware of it before I accepted the position and so basically had it dumped on me. I survived, but would definitely voice my concerns if I had to do it over again or consider a different residency.
- i. The low pay did put me behind in paying off some debts, but it also allowed me to defer student loan payments. There were some instructors who insisted we were mini MDs and that was very unappreciated by me. If I wanted to be treated like that I'd have been an MD.
- j. None

20. Please note any additional comments here:

- a. Good questions! Do a residency! :)
- b. I would likely only hire another associate if he/she were residency trained
- c. While I think that residencies are a wonderful opportunity, I do not think they are right for everyone. Not to mention there are not enough possibilities for each student to have a residency. These are the biggest drawbacks to a mandatory residency that I can see.

- d. It was hard work for little pay, but it was well worth the experience.
- e. #8. I did not get my 1st choice, but I still wanted to do the type I matched with
(generally you don't rank a residency position that you don't want)

Good luck!
- f. Good survey
- g. I think residencies are a wonderful opportunity for many people; however, I do not believe they are for everyone and should not be a mandatory part of optometric education. They are for individuals who want to pursue an academic career, specialized practice such as VA or specialty practice, or individuals who need more security in their skills and more direction that can be achieved in optometry school by itself. The average practitioner in the average primary care practice does not really benefit from a residency.
- h. I feel a residency should be required with our expanding scope of practice. I feel fourth year rotations just aren't enough...you don't get enough exposure to different types of patients, in my opinion.

Conclusion:

While former residents obviously held different views regarding different aspects of their residency experience, the overall feedback has proven to be of a positive nature. It is the hope of the author that this survey will be useful to students who are contemplating doing a residency, and to faculty and others who contribute to educating students regarding residency programs.