

August 24, 2004

THERAPEUTIC LASER EYE PROCEDURES

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive provides guidance for the clinical privileging of optometrists for performance of therapeutic laser eye procedures at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities.

2. BACKGROUND

a. VHA Handbook 1121, VHA Eye Care, states that optometrists are members of the medical staff and are to be granted clinical privileges in accordance with VHA Handbook 1100.19, Credentialing and Privileging.

b. VHA Handbook 1100.19 governs the credentialing and privileging of physicians, dentists, optometrists, podiatrists and other independent practitioners. It specifies the process by which a practitioner is permitted, by law and the facility, to practice independently based on the individual's clinical competence as determined by peer references, professional experience, health status, education, training and licensure.

c. VHA has developed policies to ensure that veterans are provided one standard of care as delineated in VHA Handbook 1100.19.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that optometrists are not to be granted clinical privileges to perform therapeutic laser eye procedures independently; they may be granted clinical privileges to perform such procedures under the supervision of an ophthalmologist, provided: the optometrist's state licensure statutes allow the performance of laser procedures, the optometrist has been fully-trained, and the optometrist's competency has been confirmed.

4. ACTION: Optometrists are not privileged to independently perform laser therapy. Each medical center Director is responsible for ensuring that all therapeutic laser eye procedures are performed under the supervision of an ophthalmologist.

5. REFERENCES

a. VHA Handbook 1121, VHA Eye Care, July 5, 2002.

b. VHA Handbook 1100.19, Credentialing and Privileging, March 6, 2001.

6. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Office of Patient Care Services (11) is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be referred to 410-779-1576.

7. RESCISSIONS: VHA Directive 2004-039 is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires August 31, 2009.

Jonathan B. Perlin, MD, PhD, MSHA, FACP
Acting Under Secretary for Health

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THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES AUGUST 31, 2009