

## Retina Training for Ophthalmic Medical Personnel

*Excerpted from Lynn Johnson, PhD and Judy E. Kim, MD*

With retina-related diseases serving as the leading cause of blindness among Americans over the age of 60, this subspecialty of ophthalmology faces unique challenges. The education and training of ophthalmic medical personnel (OMP) is one tactical measure that can greatly impact clinical productivity and quality control.

“Our goal with retina-specialty courses for technicians is to get involved and actively raise industry awareness by improving training and educational resources for ophthalmic professionals,” says Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO) Past-President William F. Astle, MD, FRCS(C), Dipl. ABO. “Technicians understand how their role contributes to helping treat retina diseases, so they are eager to acquire more training to improve their ability to provide meaningful patient education and care,” notes Astle.

In cooperation with JCAHPO, and support from an unrestricted educational grant from Genentech, Inc., Focus-ED initiated development of a new program for ophthalmic professionals, *Retina TechTrax<sup>SM</sup>*. *Retina TechTrax* focuses on the topic of retinal vascular disease, particularly diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration. Content includes epidemiology, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, clinical trials, and low vision. The goal of the program is to better educate ophthalmic professionals, who in turn will help educate patients. This can lead to the alleviation of patient’s fear, increase compliance, and improve patient outcomes. Ultimately, the series is a platform for educational exchange between leading retina specialists and ophthalmic professionals toward a shared objective: raising the quality of available care.



Director of *Focus-ED*, Susan Easter, CAE, MS, observes that the program meets demand for both patients and ophthalmic professionals. “Retinal vascular diseases, including diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration, are increasing due to several factors: the prevalence of diabetes, aging baby boomers, and longer lifespan. Eighteen-million Americans have diabetes. Of those, 40-50% will have eye disease. Additionally, 15 million Americans are affected by AMD,” says Ms. Easter. “Although these retinal diseases are not curable, emerging therapies can halt disease progression. Early detection and timely treatment can prevent vision loss.”

With an influx of older patients looming overhead, improving the education and training of ophthalmic allied health professionals is crucial. Clinics can be proactive and prepare for the care of aging population by investing in the education and training of allied health personnel.

For a list of scheduled seminars, please click on our list of [Upcoming Events](#).