

# Role of Optometrists in Prevention of Blindness

**Mahar Safdar Ali Qasim**

Assistant Professor & Head of Department  
Department of Optometry & Orthoptics  
Faculty of Rehabilitation & Allied Health Sciences  
Safdar.ali@riphah.edu.pk

Modern healthcare delivery no longer relies solely on an individual's expertise or a singular discipline; it thrives on collaborative teamwork. The field of health sciences is continuously evolving, given its multifaceted nature, comprising various subfields and disciplines with a wide range of applications for the well-being of humanity. In the vast spectrum of healthcare, there exists a vital field that plays an equally significant role in preserving our most precious sense – vision. Optometry, an integral part of the allied health sciences, deserves recognition and celebration for its invaluable contributions to public health. Optometrist offers a comprehensive approach to eye care, including vision testing, prescription of corrective lenses, diagnosis and management of eye diseases, and the promotion of ocular health.<sup>1</sup>

Global Burden of Disease (GBD) report, blindness and vision impairment ranked as the third leading cause of impairment worldwide, affecting a staggering 1.34 billion individuals. Globally, 48.2 million people were classified as blind, with an additional 39.6 million experiencing severe vision impairment, 279 million having moderate vision impairment, and 969 million facing near vision impairment where the extent of vision loss in Pakistan over the last decade remains uncertain. As a result, optometrists are in high demand globally.<sup>2</sup>

As we reflect on the past, embrace the present, and envision the future, it becomes clear that optometry is more than just eye care; it is a vision for a healthier society. One of the most remarkable aspects of optometry is its accessibility. Optometrists serve as primary eye care providers, making eye health services readily available to communities far and wide. They bridge the gap between routine eye examinations and specialized care, ensuring that individuals have access to timely and essential eye care services. This accessibility is critical in preventing and managing eye conditions, as early detection can often be the key to preserving sight.<sup>3</sup>

In the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, optometry has continued to adapt and grow in Pakistan. Technological

advancements in diagnostic tools and treatments have expanded the scope of practice for optometrists. From using state-of-the-art retinal imaging to detect early signs of diabetic retinopathy to fitting specialized contact lenses for individuals with keratoconus, optometry is at the forefront of innovations in eye care in Pakistan. Optometrists play a pivotal role in public health initiatives. They are advocates for eye health education and prevention programs. Their efforts help reduce the burden of eye diseases and visual impairments in society.<sup>4</sup>

As we look ahead, optometry's role in allied health sciences will continue to expand. With an aging population and the growing prevalence of chronic conditions like diabetes, the demand for eye care services will rise. Optometrists will be instrumental in managing the ocular complications associated with these conditions, thus contributing to improved overall health outcomes. With the rapid advancements in Optometry, medical sciences, and allied health disciplines, coupled with the continuous generation of data on disease diversity, variations, and enhanced treatment approaches, staying updated is necessary. Therefore, it has become imperative to foster research efforts and promote the publication of studies in various facets of healthcare, including optometry and related fields.

## References

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