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A survey of the optometric practice in the Armed Forces

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A survey of the optometric practice in the Armed Forces

Abstract

Military optometry was examined through a review of literature and 183 returned questionnaires from practicing Air Force, Army, and Navy optometrists. The survey asked questions about the background, present practice, and attitudes of the optometrists. The results showed that the average military optometrist offered routine refractions with limited contact lens and screening work. The optometrists had a good working relationship with other health professionals and were happy with the military. Half of the optometrists stated they would encourage other optometrists to join the military. The reasons given in favor of joining were job security, health benefits, travel, and experience. Reasons given not to become a military optometrist were unfair pay and promotion, lack of freedom to practice, frequent moves, and difficulty in getting poor equipment replaced in reasonable time.

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Committee Chair

Norman Stern

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Thesis
Opt.
Colby

A SURVEY OF THE OPTOMETRIC PRACTICE
IN THE ARMED FORCES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty
of the
Pacific University College of Optometry


In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Optometry

by
David P. Colby
Rikk J. Schlaffman

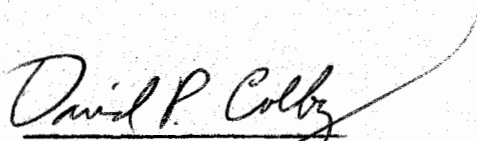
February 1980

GRADE A-


Accepted by the faculty of the College of Optometry
Pacific University, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Doctor of Optometry degree.



Thesis Advisor



David P. Colby



Rikk V. Schlaffman

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for his counsel and guidance in the completion of this
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ABSTRACT

Military optometry was examined through a review of literature and 183 returned questionnaires from practicing Air Force, Army, and Navy optometrists. The survey asked questions about the background, present practice, and attitudes of the optometrists. The results showed that the average military optometrist offered routine refractions with limited contact lens and screening work. The optometrists had a good working relationship with other health professionals and were happy with the military. Half of the optometrists stated they would encourage other optometrists to join the military. The reasons given in favor of joining were job security, health benefits, travel, and experience. Reasons given not to become a military optometrist were unfair pay and promotion, lack of freedom to practice, frequent moves, and difficulty in getting poor equipment replaced in reasonable time.

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INTRODUCTION

Military optometry is one mode of practice available to the graduating optometry student. The purpose of this project was to evaluate the current scope of optometry in the Armed Forces. The study examined military optometric literature and returned questionnaires from practicing military optometrists.

The literature reviewed was divided into three groups; (1) the Armed Forces Health Professions Scholarship Program, (2) military advertisements, and (3) the American Optometric Association's definition of full scope optometry.

The Health Professions Scholarship Program was set up under Public Law 92-425 in 1972 to financially assist students in health professions schools and aid in the procurement of health care professionals for the military. Optometrists would work for the military in return for the financial aid given during the period of professional schooling. The recruiting literature stated that the new optometry officer would have a clinical practice with modern equipment.¹

The Air Force issued pamphlets which stated that their equipment was modern, experience could be gained, and continuing education was available.² Navy optometrists are assigned to health facilities, industrial locations, and research laboratories.³ Army optometry advertisements in American Optometric Association (AOA) journals list experience as the primary advantage of entering the Army as an

optometrist.⁴ Army optometrists engage in direct patient care, teaching, and organizational health.⁵ Gregg (1978) stated the Army optometrist worked with vision training, developmental vision, contact lens, subnormal, and school vision.

The AOA's definition of optometric service has expanded beyond clinical refraction and dispensing and now includes visual screenings, contact lens fitting, vision therapy, orthoptics, low vision, industrial vision, and public health.⁶

In order to learn more about the optometry program in the Air Force, Army, and Navy, a survey of practicing military optometry officers was performed to collect additional information.

METHOD

A survey letter was constructed which contained questions concerning the background, the present form of practice, and opinions of the optometrists. A copy of the letter is found in Appendix A.

Survey letters with stamped return addressed envelopes were sent to 105 Air Force, 70 Army, and 75 Navy optometrists. Current rosters were obtained from each branch for addresses.

RESULTS

The Air Force, Army, and Navy optometrists returned 79, 55, and 49 usable survey letters respectively. The returned letters represented 73.2 per cent of the 250 letters sent. Table I shows the breakdown of the survey return letters.

TABLE I
THE BREAKDOWN OF THE
SURVEY RETURN

Branch	Number sent	Number returned	Number usable	Per Cent usable
Air Force	105	80	79	75.2
Army	70	56	55	78.5
Navy	75	51	49	65.3
Total	250	186	183	73.2

Since each branch does not have the same title for each rank, the results are listed by the grade number. The lower ranked optometrists (0-2, 0-3) are listed as Group 1 and the upper ranks (0-4, 0-5, 0-6) are listed as Group 2. The results are listed by group in the later questions. Table II lists the rank of the officers surveyed.

TABLE II
THE RANK AND TITLE STRUCTURE OF
MILITARY OPTOMETRISTS

Group in study	Grade Number	Air Force Title	Army Title	Navy Title
1	0-2	1st Lieutenant	1st Lieutenant	Lieutenant j.g.
	0-3	Captain	Captain	Lieutenant
2	0-4	Major	Major	Lieutenant Comm.
	0-5	Lieutenant Col.	Lieutenant Col.	Commander
	0-6	Colonel	Colonel	Captain

Individual Question Results

1. and 2: Branch of service and rank?

Officers with the rank of 0-3 returned 95 (52%) survey letters. The lowest ranked optometrists (0-2) surveyed returned 34 (18.6%) letters followed by 17.4% return from officers with a grade of 0-4. The two highest ranks (0-5, 0-6) made up 11% and 1% of the survey, respectively. See Table III.

TABLE III

THE MILITARY OPTOMETRISTS WHO RETURNED THE LETTER SURVEYS

Grade	Air Force	Army	Navy	Total	% Total
0-2	4	7	23	34	18.5
0-3	55	26	14	95	52
0-4	14	13	5	32	17.4
0-5	6	8	6	20	11
0-6	-	1	1	2	1
Total	79	55	49	183	100

3: Years in service?

One third of the officers indicated they had been in the service less than three years and over half stated they had been in less than six years. No officers with a grade of 0-4 had less than six years in the service with the majority indicating they had over ten years of active duty. See Table IV.

TABLE IV

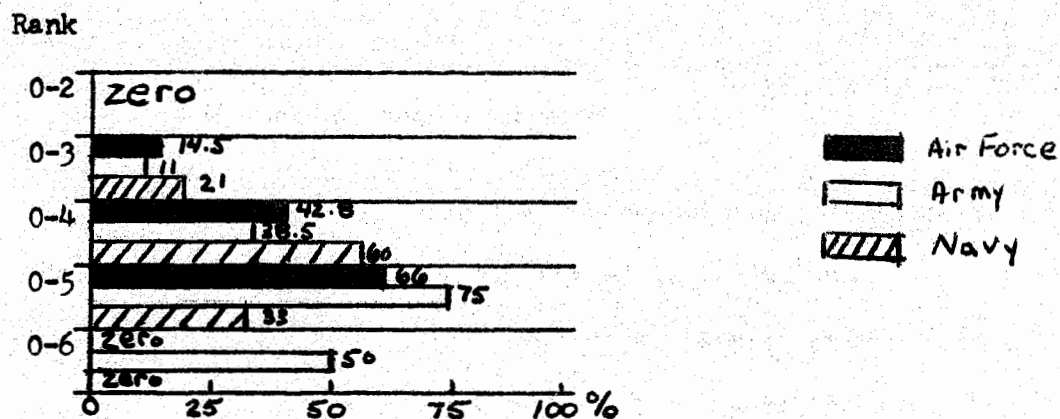
THE NUMBER OF YEARS OF SERVICE

Years	0-2			0-3			0-4			0-5			0-6			# Total	% Total
	AF	A	N	AF	A	N	AF	A	N	AF	A	N	AF	A	N		
0-1	3	3	12	3	1	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	12
1-2 ³ / ₄	-	4	10	19	7	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	24.6
3-5 ³ / ₄	1	-	-	18	10	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	19.1
6-9 ³ / ₄	-	-	-	12	8	2	1	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	14.8
10-14 ³ / ₄	-	-	1	3	1	-	7	5	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	21	11.5
15-19 ³ / ₄	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	5	1	3	3	4	-	-	-	20	10.9
over 20	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	3	5	1	-	1	1	13	7.1
																Total 183	100

NOTE: AF-Air Force A-Army N-Navy

4: Did you have a civilian practice before joining the service?

No officers with grade 0-2 had worked in a civilian practice prior to their military commitment. Approximately half of those officers with a grade of 0-4 or higher had previous experience with a civilian practice. The length of time in practice was not included in these results. See Graph 1.



Graph 1. Percent of officers who previously practiced in a civilian setting.

5: School of Optometry?

Southern College of Optometry contributed 23.5% of the officers to the survey followed by Pacific University College

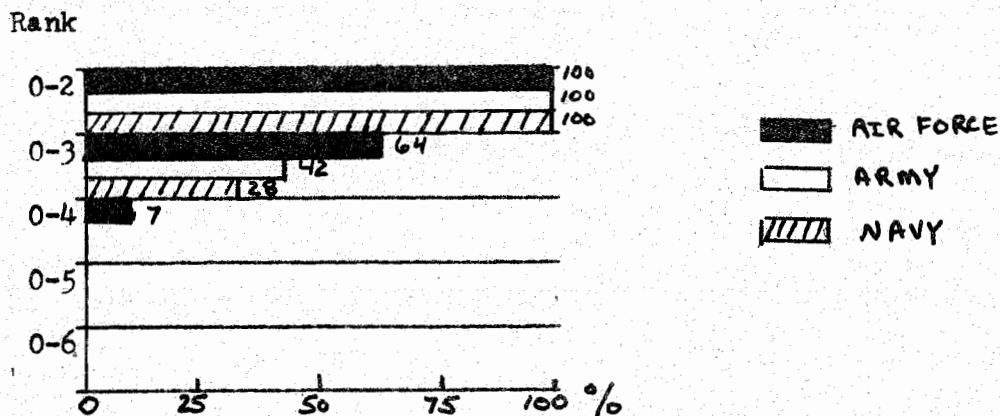
of Optometry with 21.3%. Pennsylvania and Illinois colleges followed with the next highest numbers of 13.1% and 10.9% respectively. Each of the other nine schools of optometry in the United States contributed less than 10% each. See Table V.

TABLE V
OPTOMETRY SCHOOLS ATTENDED BY OFFICERS WHO
RETURNED THE LETTER SURVEYS

<u>School</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% Total</u>
SCO	23	15	5	43	23.5
Pacific	15	16	8	39	21.3
Pennsylvania	13	6	5	24	13.1
Illinois	9	3	8	20	10.9
New England	3	4	5	12	6.6
SCCD	4	3	4	11	6.0
Berkeley	4	4	1	9	4.9
Ohio	3	1	4	8	4.4
Houston	3	1	2	6	3.3
Indiana	1	1	3	5	2.7
Ferris	1	1	1	3	1.6
Alabama	-	-	2	2	1.1
SUNY	-	-	1	1	0.5

6: Are you presently on initial obligation tour?

All officers entering the service with a rank of 0-2 were on initial obligation tour. In the Navy, 28% of those with rank of 0-3 were on their initial tour. The Air Force and Army officers with 0-3 rank had 64% and 42% on their initial tour, respectively. One Major in the Air Force indicated he was on his initial tour. See Graph 2.



Graph 2. Per cent of officers who are on initial obligation.

7: Plans for future?

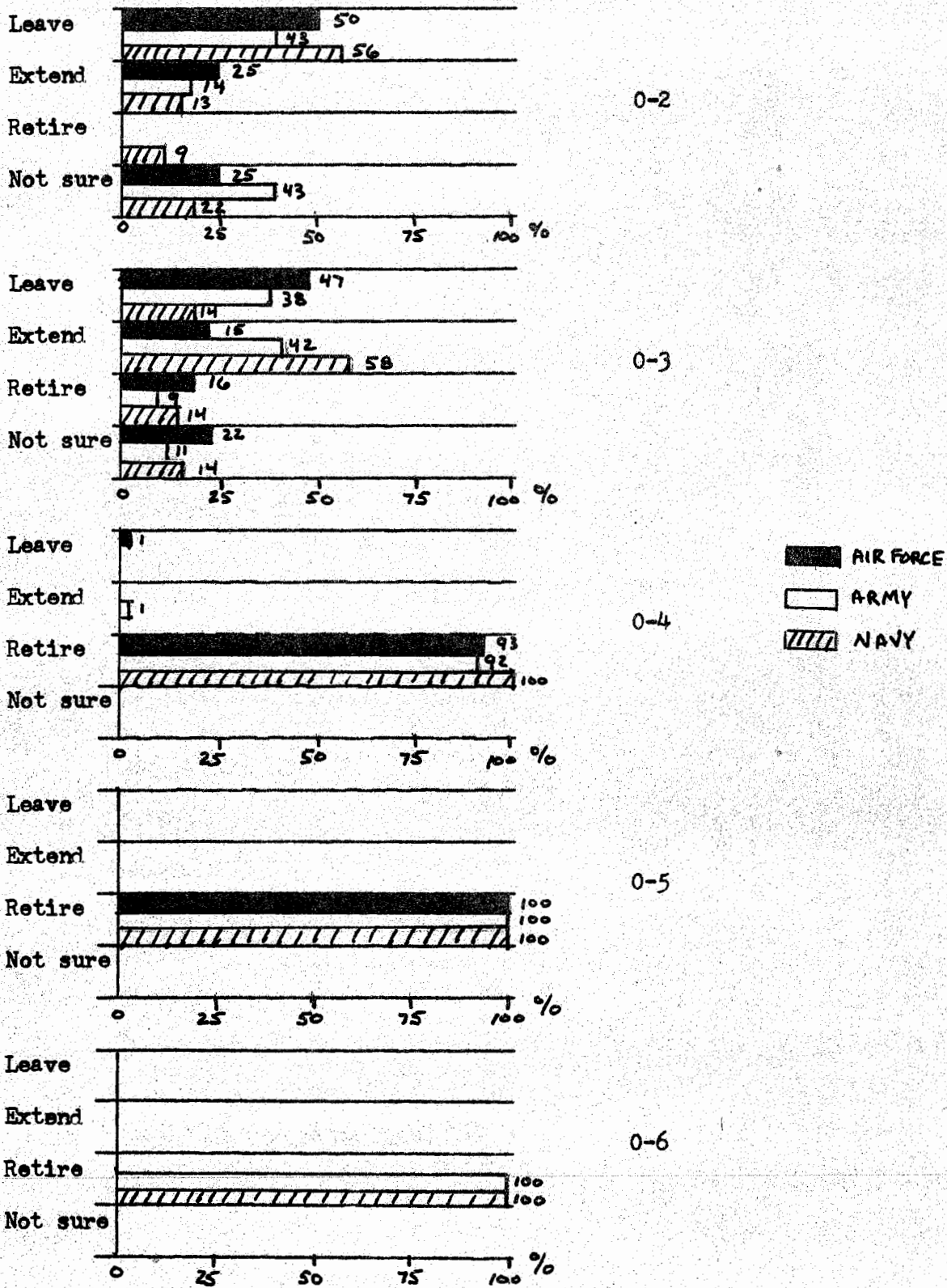
Half of the officers (52.9%) with a rank of 0-2 plan to leave after they have completed their minimum obligation while 40% of the officers with grade 0-3 are planning to leave after their present tour. All of the Group 2 (0-4, 0-5, 0-6) officers except two Majors plan to retire. One fourth of the new optometrists (0-2) were not sure of their future plans at the time they were surveyed. The results of each rank are represented in Graph 3.

8: Are you a member of AFOS?

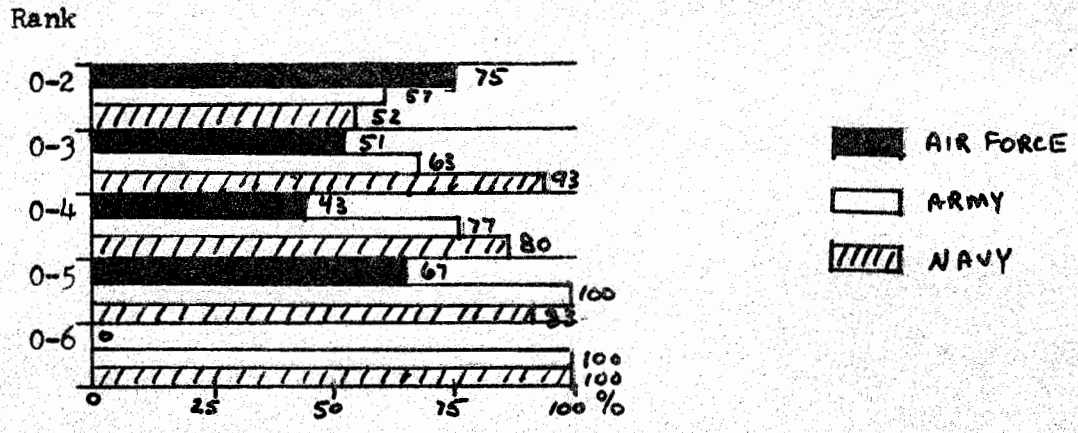
The Armed Forces Optometric Society (AFOS) had a membership of 61.2% of the officers surveyed in this study. The Army, Navy, and Air Force had 72.7%, 71.4%, and 51.9% of their optometrists in the organization. See Graph 4.

9: What services are offered?

Group 1 (0-2, 0-3) had 100% of its officers performing general refractions. Contact lens work was offered by 90%



Graph 3. Future plans of the officers in each rank. Results given in per cent.



Graph 4. The percentage of officers belonging to AFOS.

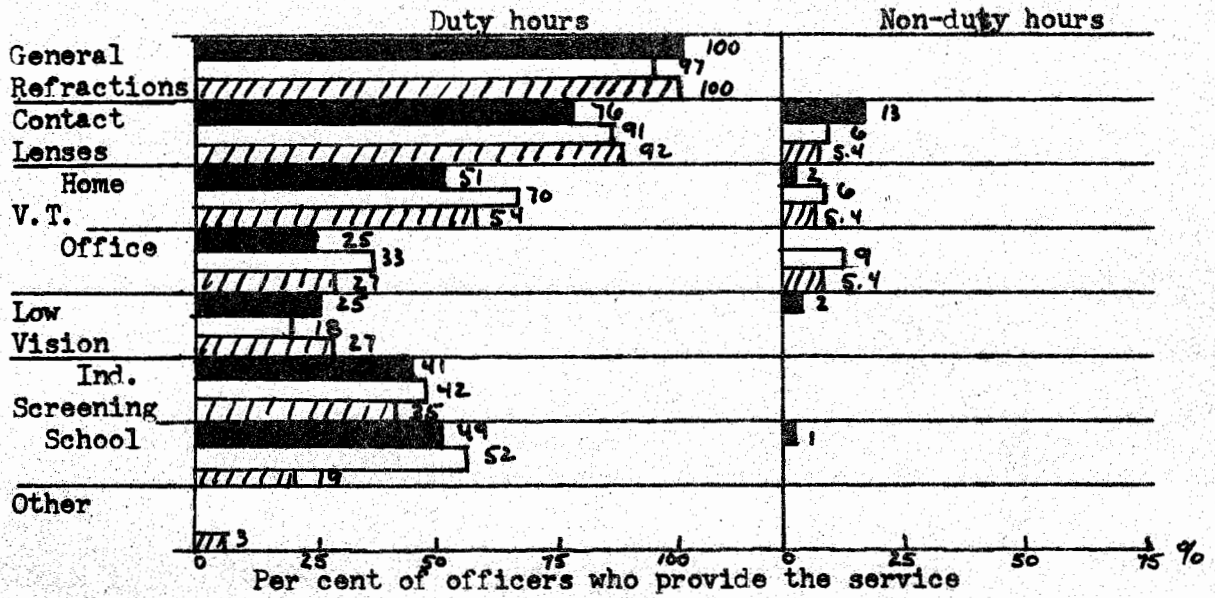
of the Army and Navy officers and by 76% of the Air Force optometrists. Over 50% of the optometrists provided home visual training, but less than a third provided office training. One fourth of the officers provided low vision aid with another third to half providing screenings in an industrial or school setting.

The majority (85%) of Group 2 optometrists provided both refractions and contact lens services. The results of the other services offered were similar to Group 1.

In Group 1, services provided during nonduty hours were minimal to the patient. Contact lens exams and visual training were offered during non-duty hours by a small percentage of officers. Less than 2% of Group 2 provided care after duty hours. Graphs 5 and 6 show the services offered by the optometrists surveyed.

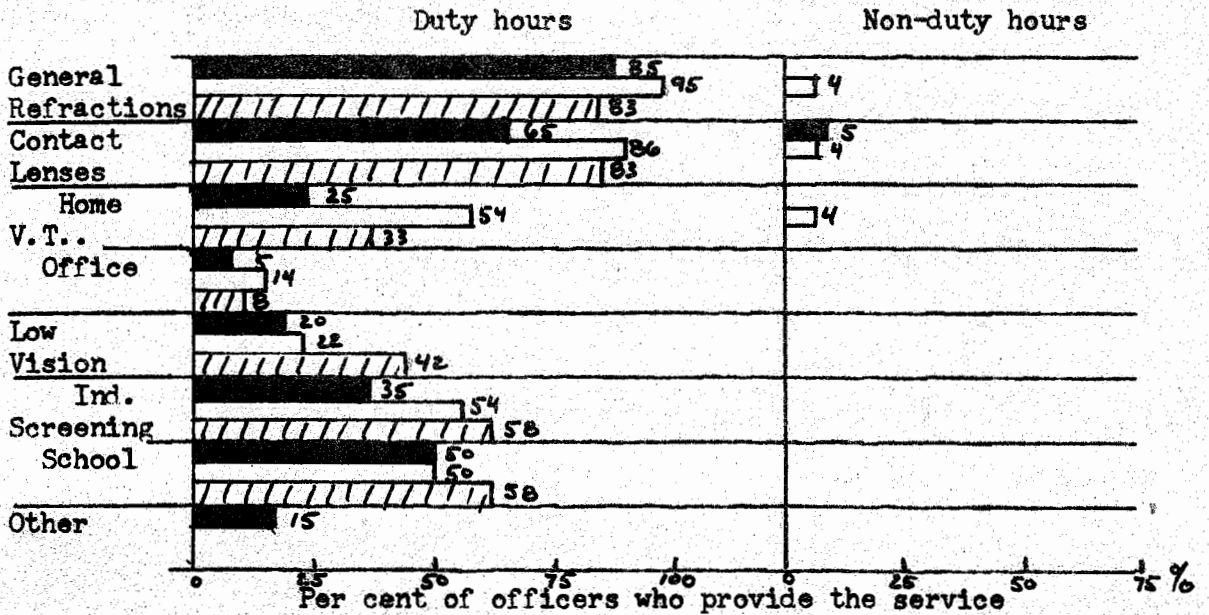
10: Location of practice?

In Group 1, 60% of the optometrists practiced in a



Graph 5. Services provided by Group 1 optometrists (0-2, 0-3)

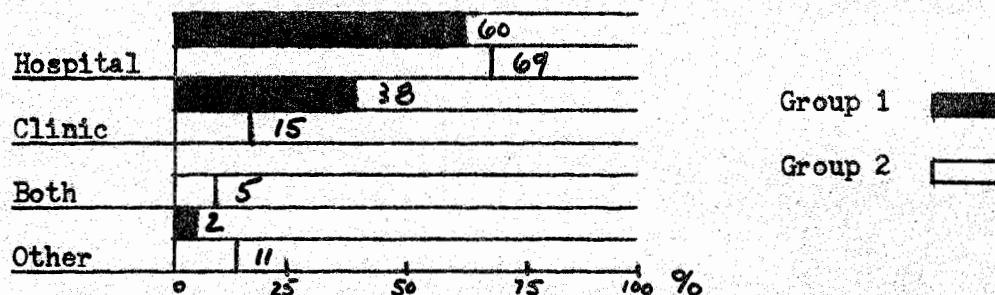
AIR FORCE
 ARMY
 NAVY



Graph 6. Services provided by Group 2 optometrists (0-4, 0-5, 0-6)

hospital setting. Group 2 optometrists had a slightly higher percentage (69%) in hospitals and 15% practiced in a clinic location.

Group 2 had 11% of their officers in locations other than hospitals or clinics. See Graph 7.



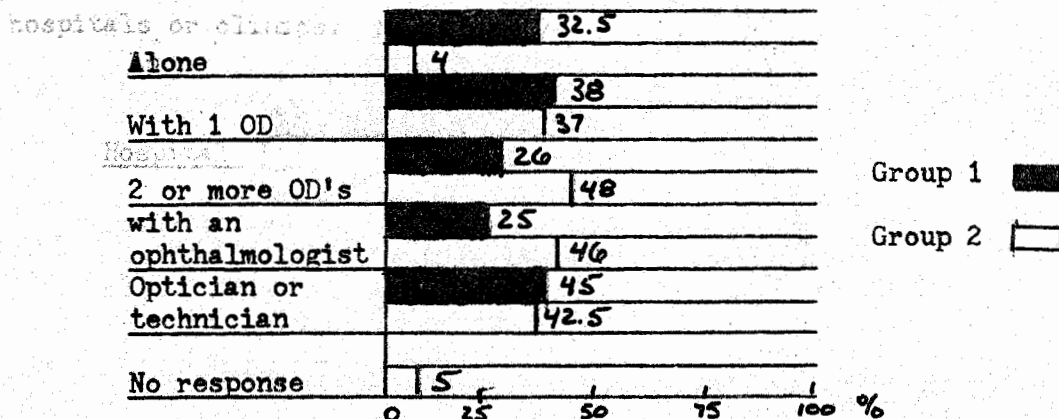
Graph 7. The location of practice of Group 1 and Group 2 optometry officers.

11: Who do you practice with?

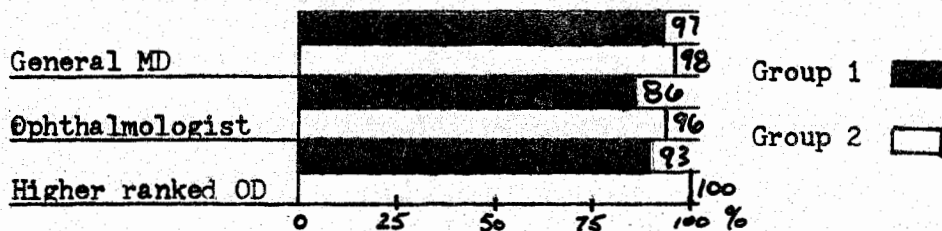
One third of Group 1 officers practiced alone and another one fourth practiced with two or more optometrists. The majority (38%) of the officers practiced with one or more optometrists. One fourth of Group 1 worked with an ophthalmologist and almost one half (45%) indicated they had a technician that worked with them. In Group 2, the majority (48%) worked with two or more optometrists and almost half (46%) indicated they worked with an ophthalmologist. See Graph 8.

12: Happiness of officer with working relationships.

A small number (14%) of Group 1 optometrists were not happy with the working relationship with ophthalmologists, although, almost all of the officers (96%) were satisfied with the working relationship with other optometrists and medical officers. Almost all Group 2 optometrists were satisfied with their professional relationships. See Graph 9.



Graph 8. People the optometry officers worked with.
(Responses given in per cent)



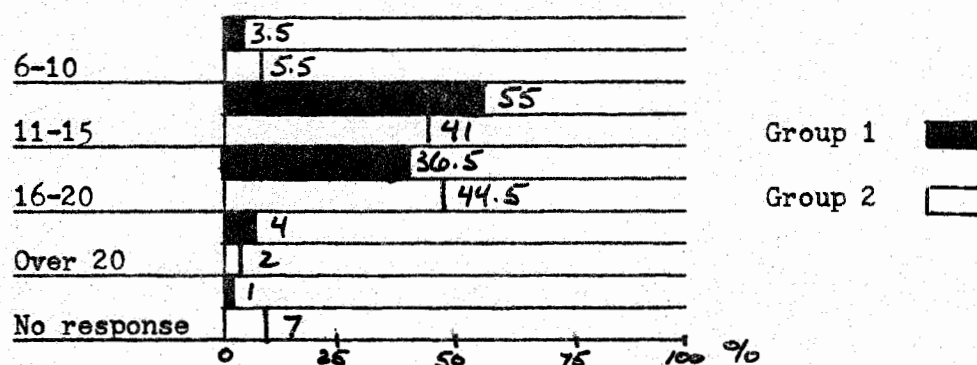
Graph 9. Per cent of officers satisfied with their working relationship with the professionals listed.

13: How many patients do you see during an average day?

The daily number of patients seen by military optometrists varied between 11 and 20, with most of Group 1 (55%) seeing 11 to 15 patients and most of Group 2 (44.5%) seeing more than 15 patients during an average day. See Graph 10.

14: What patient population do you see? and what per cent of your practice does it include?

The patient population of both groups consisted of active duty, dependents of active duty, and retired personnel. Each of these patient groups made up a third of the average optometrist's patient population as shown in Table VI.



Graph 10. Daily number of patients seen by the optometrists surveyed.

TABLE VI

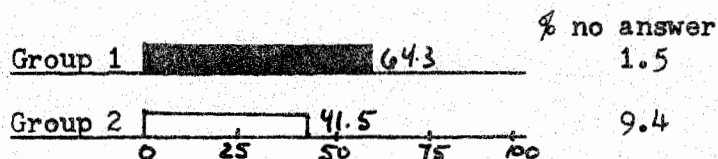
PER CENT OF OPTOMETRY OFFICER'S PATIENT POPULATION AS LISTED BY TYPE

Patient type	Per cent of patient population			
	Group 1			
Active duty	0-25 29%	26-50 46%	51-75 14%	76-100 11%
Dependent active duty	35%	59%	6%	-
Retired and dependents	43.5%	43.5%	10%	3%
	Group 2			
Active duty	0-25 39.5%	26-50 37.5%	51-75 10.5%	76-100 12.5%
Dependent active duty	35%	56.5%	6.5%	2%
Retired and dependents	43.5%	41.5%	13%	2%

NOTE: This table should be read as follows: 29% of the optometrists in Group 1 indicated that active duty personnel made up 0-25% of their patient population.

15: Do you have extra duties?

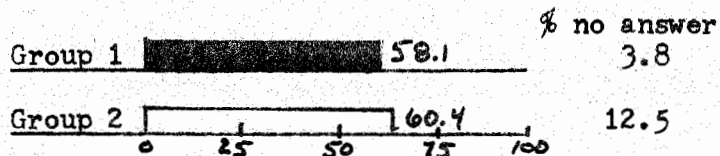
The lower ranked optometrists displayed a higher per cent of officers (64.3%) performing extra duties than those officers in Group 2 (41.5%). The most frequently listed duty was Administrative Officer of the Day (AOD). See Graph 11.



Graph 11. Per cent answering "yes" to having extra duties.

16: Are you allowed to work at a part time private practice?

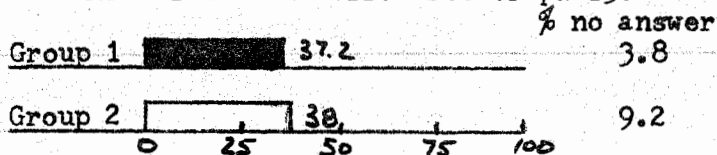
Approximately 60% of the optometrists, reported they were allowed to work at a part time private practice, but only 3.8% of each group indicated that they actually worked at a civilian practice on a part time basis. See Graph 12.



Graph 12. Per cent allowed to work part time at a civilian practice.

17: Do you have any afternoons off?

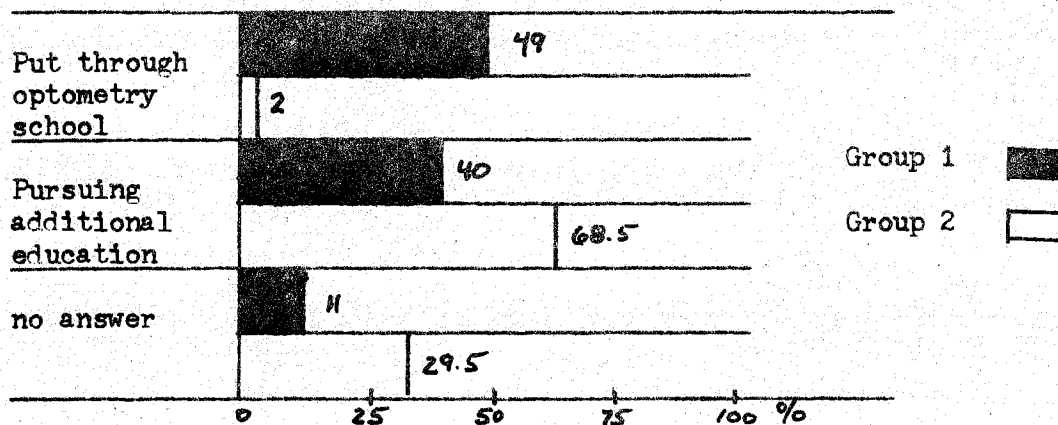
Both groups one and two showed 38% of their officers having one or more afternoons off. See Graph 13.



Graph 13. Per cent of officers allowed an afternoon off.

18: Have or are you taking advantage of the education benefits?

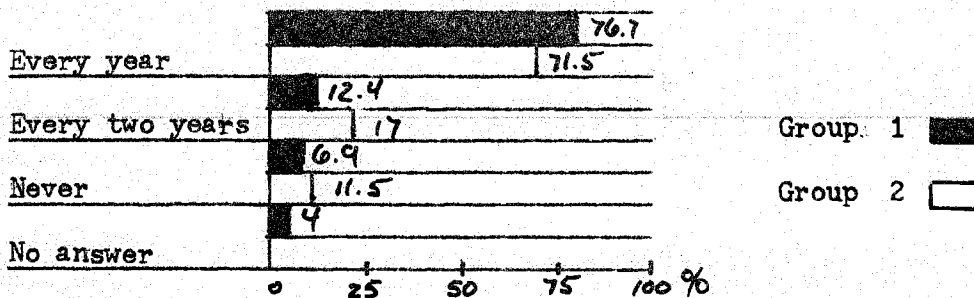
Half of Group 1 (49%) attended professional school with some form of aid from the military. In Group 2, only one officer indicated that help had been obtained from the military, but 68.5% had reported they were pursuing additional education while in the military. See Graph 14.



Graph 14. Educational benefits used by military optometrists (listed in per cent)

19: Do you attend AOA conventions? continuing ed.?

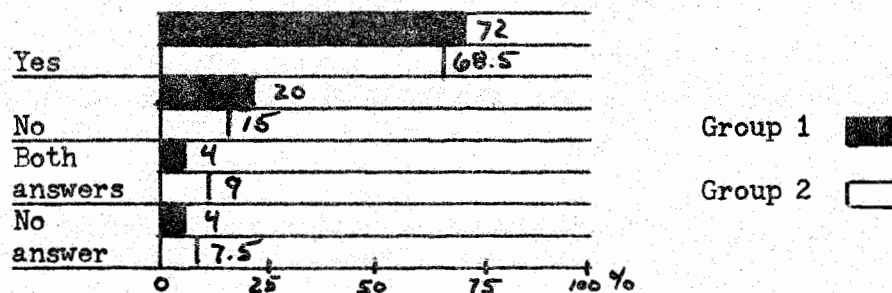
Conventions or continuing education programs were attended by over 70% of each group. In Group 2, 11% did not attend any meetings and 7% of Group 1 did not attend meetings. See Graph 15.



Graph 15. Officers attendance at conventions or continuing education meetings.

20: Is the military optometry program what you expected?

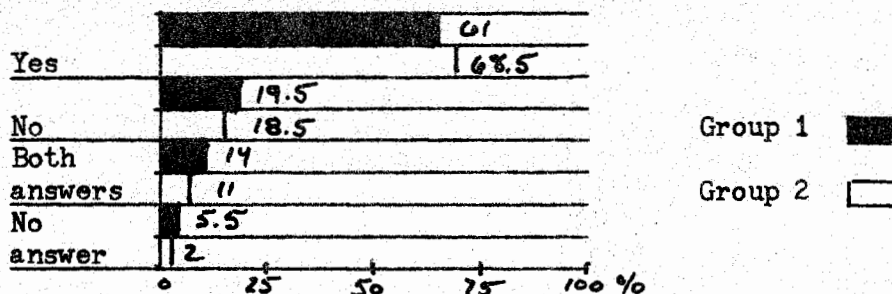
The majority of both groups responded positively to this question. A slightly higher number (9%) of Group 2 answered both "yes" and "no" than did Group 1 (4%). See Graph 16.



Graph 16. Officer's expectations of the military fulfilled.

21: Are you happy with the military?

In both Group 1 and Group 2, 60% reported they were happy with the military. One out of ten officers in both groups reported they had mixed feelings. See Graph 17.

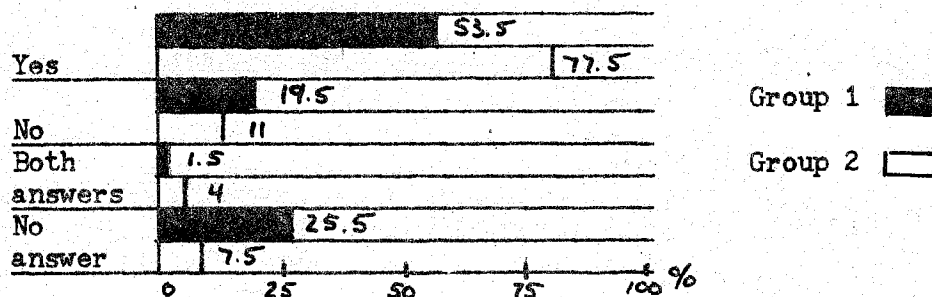


Graph 17. Response to being happy with the military.

22: If married, is your spouse happy with the military?

The higher ranked officers had a greater number (77.5%) of spouses happy with the military than those officers in Group 1 (53.5%). In Group 1, 25.5% gave no response to this

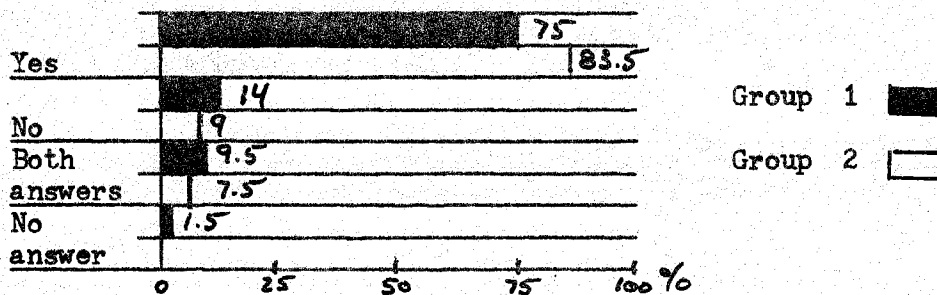
question. Graph 18 shows the responses.



Graph 18. Response to spouse's happiness with the military.

23: Do you feel treated as a professional?

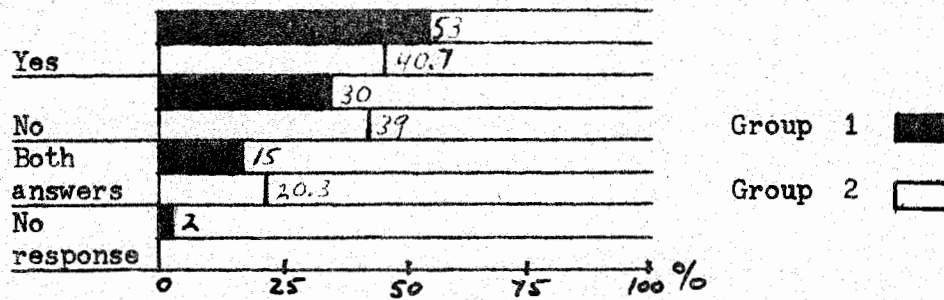
The majority of Group 1 (75%) and Group 2 (83.5%) believed they were treated as professionals. Less than 10% of each group had mixed feelings. Many letters contained comments and a representation is found in the Appendix. See Graph 19.



Graph 19. Response to feeling treated as a professional.

24: Would you encourage other O.D.'s to join?

Half of Group 1 (53%) would encourage others to join, but less than half of Group 2 (40.7%) would encourage others to join. Comments were numerous and a sampling is found in the Appendix. See Graph 20.



Graph 20. Response to encouraging other O.D.'s to join.

DISCUSSION

Half of the new officers (0-2) surveyed, indicated they were planning to leave the service after completion of their minimum obligation. The low retention of optometrists was one of the reasons the HPSP scholarships were started in 1972. The program has been a major source of optometric manpower for the military. One half (49%) of the lower ranked optometrists received aid during their schooling as compared to 2% of the older and higher ranked optometrists. Although not specified in the questions, it is suspected a large percentage of those officers in the survey who received financial help in college were in the HPSP program.

Much of the literature reviewed stated that many services were provided by the military optometrist. The survey of 183 optometrists showed that refractions, contact lens, visual training, low vision, and screenings were done in all branches of the military, but not all services were

provided by each optometrist. In fact, after general refractions and contact lens work, the per cent of practitioners that offered the other services dropped to one half or less. Visual training, as expected, was offered as an out of office procedure. Although the military as a whole may offer a full scope of optometric services, it is doubtful that most clinics offer much more than refractions, contact lenses, and minimal visual training. At the same time it is important to remember that the patient load was found to be high (11-20 per day) and time may be the greatest detriment to the practice of additional services. Dependent on services offered, some optometrists provided care during non duty hours.

A new optometrist worked alone, with one optometrist, or with two or more optometrists when he or she entered the military. Those optometrists who worked with ophthalmologists had a good working relationship and felt they were treated as professionals, themselves. More than half of the lower ranked optometrists reported they had extra duties. Administrative Officer of the Day (AOD) was the most common duty reported, but officers listed everything from Linen Officer to Mosquito Control Officer. These duties varied depending on the base or clinic.

The questions which asked opinions of the optometrists were not as easily answered. It was found that many respondents answered both "yes" and "no" to the last few questions

or choose to make a qualified answer.

Most officers indicated they were happy and found the military to their expectations. Honest recruiters, prior service, and personal investigation before entering the military were reasons given for the positive attitudes toward the military. Comments seemed to indicate that poor location and misinterpretation were reasons for negative responses. The optometrist's spouses attitude seemed to reflect their own feelings when the results of question 21 and 22 were compared. A high number of single optometrists did not answer the latter question.

Most of the comments found in the returned surveys were in regard to the last question. Some of the comments are shown in Appendix B.

In conclusion, the returned questionnaires from the military optometrists showed:

1. Half of the optometrists (49%) with a rank of O-2 and O-3 had received financial help during their professional schooling as compared to 2% of the higher ranked military optometrists.
2. More than half (52.9%) of the optometrists on their first tour of duty planned to leave when the tour was done.
3. Routine refractions and contact lens services were offered by 65% or more of the optometrists, but other services included in the AOA's definition of full scope optometry were offered by a smaller number of military optometry officers.
4. The majority of optometrists (60%) were happy with the military program and 75% of the officers also felt they were treated as professionals.

5. Half of the officers with a rank of O-2 and O-3 (53%) and 40.7% of the higher ranked optometrists stated they would encourage other optometrists to join the military.

The optometrist who is thinking about working for the government as a military optometrist should look at both the advantages and disadvantages that may be present.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

PACIFIC UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY



Doctor:

We are 4th year Optometry students doing a survey of military optometrists and the services they offer in their practices. Would you please complete this survey and return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. A copy of this research survey will be available at Pacific University College of Optometry. Thank you for your cooperation.

David Colby
David Colby
Fourth Year Student

Rikk Schlaffman
Rikk Schlaffman
Fourth Year Student

Norman Stern
Norman Stern, O.D., Ph.D.
Advisor

- 1. Branch of Service:
 Army
 Air Force
 Navy
- 2. Rank: _____
- 3. Years in service: _____
- 4. Did you have a civilian practice before joining the service? _____ Yes _____ No
 (If Yes, how long?) _____
- 5. School of Optometry: _____ Year graduated: _____
- 6. Are you presently on initial obligation tour? _____ Yes _____ No
- 7. Are you planning to:
 Leave after minimum obligation. If so, why? _____
 Extend tour of duty. _____
 Retire from the service. _____
- 8. Are you a member of AFOS? _____ Yes _____ No

9. Please check the services offered in your practice.

	Performed during:	Duty	Non-Duty Hours
General Refraction		___	___
Contact Lenses		___	___
Visual Training		___	___
Home		___	___
Office		___	___
Low Vision Screenings		___	___
Industrial		___	___
School		___	___
Other (specify) _____		___	___

10. Are you located in a :
 Hospital
 Clinic
 Other (specify) _____

11. Do you practice:
 Alone
 With one O.D.
 With 2 or more O.D.s
 With an ophthalmologist
 Optician/Technician

12. Are you happy with the working relationship between you and (check appropriate):
 M.D. general practice Yes No
 M.D. ophthalmologist Yes No
 O.D. higher rank Yes No

13. How many patients do you see during an average :
 Day _____
 Week _____

14. What patient population do you see?
 Active Duty _____ %
 Dependents Active Duty _____ %
 Retired _____ %

15. Do you have extra duties (AOD, SOD, etc)? Yes No
 Describe _____

16. Are you allowed to work at a part-time private practice? Yes No
 If Yes, do you? _____

17. Do you have any afternoons off? Yes No

18. Have or are you taking advantage of the education benefits:
 Put through Optometry School
 Pursuing additional education while in service

19. Attend AOA conventions/Continuing Education:
 Every year
 Every two years
 Never

- 20. Is the military optometry program what you expected? _____ Yes _____ No
Why? _____
- 21. Are you happy with the military? _____ Yes _____ No
(Comment on back)
- 22. If married, is your wife happy with the military? _____ Yes _____ No
- 23. Do you feel treated as a professional Doctor of Optometry? _____ Yes _____ No
If not, why? _____
- 24. Would you encourage other O.D.s to join? _____ Yes _____ No

Comments or statements can be written on the back. This survey is confidential and should not be signed. Thank you for your participation in this research project.

Appendix B

Comments listed by those surveyed.

20: Is the military optometry program what you expected?

"Busy, but great experience!" Navy Lt. j.g. (0-2)

"After talking to different O.D.'s I have found that the clinic where you are stationed is very important in determining someones happiness with the service." Navy Lt. j.g. (0-2)

"Too cheap in equipment, manpower, and poor management." Air Force Captain (0-3)

"I had a very honest recruiter who told me everything to expect as far as pro-pay, etc. The preceding doctor gave me an excellent orientation also." Air Force Captain (0-3)

"...professional pay and promotion not good." Air Force Lt. Col. (0-5)

"...too limited and confined." Army Captain (0-3)

21: Are you happy with the military?

"Yes it is tolerable, we have good ophthalmologists and a good working relationship. It puts money in your pocket while your waiting for Board results....also you can practice without Boards in the military..." Navy Lt. j.g. (0-2)

"Benefits are many plus scholarship money made it possible to get through school, however, there are alot of politics and "brown nosing" involved in getting ahead in the service." Navy Lt. (0-3)

"...the question that any potential military O.D. has to ask himself is whether he can adjust to the military way of doing things." Air Force Captain (0-3)

"No, if I were in clinic. Your practice is repetitive refractions with little time for CLs, training, etc." Air Force Major (0-4)

"Your satisfaction depends a great deal upon your hospital commander." Air Force Major (0-4)

"The salary is not as good as civilian life, but we have great benefits such as medical and dental care, use of the commissary, hobby shops, etc." Air Force 1st Lt. (0-2)

"Happy is a relative term. I enjoy optometry...you'll have to try it to see if you'll like it!" Air Force Captain (0-3)

"Satisfaction with the military is an individual consideration." Army Major (0-4)

22: If married, is your spouse happy with the military?

"One of the main items here is the time available for ourselves." Air Force Captain (0-3)

"My wife is very supportive of me in most things I do. There are many things she likes about the Air Force that outweigh the dislikes." Air Force Captain (0-3)

"My wife's dissatisfaction involves frequent moves and what at times is poor quality health care." Air Force Captain (0-3)

"She enjoys travel as much as I do. We both feel comfortable with the security of knowing our children will never be hurt because of a failing practice or a failing economy." Army Captain (0-3)

23: Do you feel treated as a professional Doctor of Optometry?

"Ophthalmology never hesitates to exert their belief in their seniority over the optometrist." Navy Lt. j.g. (0-2)

"My relationship with the MD's and PPA's is super." Air Force Captain (0-3)

"There is a close relationship between the O.D.'s and M.D.'s although they seem to have a tendency to look on you as inferior." Navy Lt. j.g. (0-2)

"For the most part I have been treated as an equal...the ones (ophthalmologists) I have met and talked with are very congenial, helpful, and professional." Air Force Major (0-4)

"...as an O.D. we are at the mercy of the M.D.'s who write your OERs and are your supervisors." Air Force (0-4)

"I feel it is better now than ever before." Army Major (0-4)

24: Would you encourage other O.D.'s to join?

"Yes, if it keeps young O.D.'s from going commercial."
Navy Lt. j.g. (0-2)

"I think military optometry is an excellent way to gain experience in good eye care." Navy Lt. j.g. (0-2)

"Too many patients, ophthalmology has final say, enter lower rank than M.D., lower pay, no bonuses at end of year. Ophthalmology gets new and better equipment-we don't."
Navy Lt. (0-3)

"I encourage others to join from an experience standpoint. But they should be aware that they will be told what to do."
Navy Lt. (0-3)

"Unless equitable pay packages and promotional policies are developed, there is little to entice a new O.D. into a permanent military career." Navy Lt. (0-3)

"I suggest getting all the facts before making any decisions. I felt I had covered all the bases, but I misjudged some previous attitudes." 1st Lt. Air Force (0-3)

"The answer to that is not so easy to give at this point in time given my perception of the political climate (FTC, Medicare, NHL, Champus, etc.) if I had to do it over again I'm not sure I would." Navy Commander (0-5)

"For an optometrist straight out of school the military offers practice and experience. However, to make a career of the military a doctor must sacrifice his professional ethics and be willing to become basically a refractionist." Air Force Captain (0-3)

"Advantages to the Army: professional practice, security, and travel..." Army Captain (0-3)

"Try it, then get out if you don't like it." Navy Lt. Cmdr (0-4)

"I believe the Air Force is a good place to get basic exposure prior to setting up a practice, however I cannot recommend anyone joining with the expectations of a rewarding and satisfying career-you won't find it here." Air Force 1st Lt. (0-2)

"Military optometry is ideal for bachelors." Army Lt. Col. (0-5)

"...this is something each person must decide based on as many facts as they can obtain." Army Colonel (0-6)

"I strongly advocate a boycott into all branches until such time as the work force is so low, that the active duty force can't be seen, perhaps then professional pay, entrance credits and promotions will be equitable." Air Force Major (O-4)

"I only encourage others to join the military if they are going to promote functional and ethical optometry." Air Force Captain (O-3)