InfantSEE: Scoping Out the National Application of this Public Health Program

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Abstract
The goal of this research was to explore ODs reasons behind non-participation in the InfantSEE program in an effort to help guide the American Optometric Association in program improvements. Comprehensive eye examinations are important to ensure adequate visual abilities and prevent amblyopia. When vision disorders are left untreated, developmental delays and learning barriers can occur, leading to poor school performance. A survey was created using Survey Monkey and distributed to alumni of U.S. optometry schools and members of U.S. optometric state associations.

Introduction
The AOA has created a remarkable program available to all infants between 6 and 12 months of age.
- InfantSEE provides a no-cost, comprehensive eye examination which can flag a sight-threatening problem and allow early intervention to prevent future damage and vision loss.
- Since beginning in 2005, over 100,000 infants have received care through InfantSEE, 1 in 10 had a previously undetected vision problem.
- Amblyopia is the 4th most frequent form of blindness in the United States, and is also the most preventable vision disorder affecting children.
- Early infant examinations are vital in detecting and treating preventable disease while vision is pliable.
- In order to ensure this program is being utilized to its full potential, marketing and expansion is imperative.

Methods
A 22 question survey was created via Survey Monkey and emailed to all 22 U.S. optometry schools, all 50 U.S. optometric state associations, and shared on social media websites. Each US optometry school and state association’s primary correspondent was asked to distribute the survey link to their alumni/members. Survey Monkey collected and compiled the responses into separate categories to be analyzed. Categories of interest were:
- Years practicing optometry
- Percentage of subjects who feel qualified to be a provider
- Participation in InfantSEE program
- Number of InfantSEE exams performed per year
- Number of infant exams performed per year by non-providers
- Percentage of ocular disease diagnosed in InfantSEE exams
- Primary InfantSEE marketing strategy
- Primary source of infant exam confidence
- Reasons for not participating in the program

Results
- 572 optometrists participated
- Majority of subjects have been practicing for >20 years (33%), followed by 0-5 years (30%)
- 82% felt qualified to perform infant examinations, only 56% of which are InfantSEE providers
- Of non-providers, 78% perform 0-5 infant exams per year
- 97% of providers stated that 0-5 cases of treatable ocular disease are diagnosed each year during their InfantSEE exams
- Marketing strategies most utilized by providers are in-office displays (50%) and social media (23%); 39% do not market
- Confidence for becoming a provider was gained by seeing patients (76%)

Discussion
InfantSEE is a unique program, but doctors seem to be polarized about its perception. In our survey, some praised the program and how it helps children, families, and communities. Others criticized it due to it being a no-cost service, as well as lack of promotion and public awareness. As InfantSEE celebrates its 10th anniversary, there are many reasons to celebrate-- such as the 10,000 babies per year on average who receive care. Yet struggles persist, such as the issue with growing the program to support the 4 million babies born per year, keeping up with the Affordable Care Act changes, or continuing to educate optometrists on providing care to our youngest patients, the ease at which it is done, and the value it brings to the practice. Just as babies need guidance to enhance their development, we hope the InfantSEE program can utilize the information provided in this study to continue to grow and develop to help millions of babies in the next ten years.

References

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