

# **DR. IRWIN B. SUCHOFF RESIDENCY PROGRAM IN VISION THERAPY AND REHABILITATION CURRICULUM**

## **INTRODUCTION**

SUNY College of Optometry has been conducting a year long in-house Vision Therapy & Rehabilitation Residency since graduating its first class in 1975. This residency program was the first established residency in optometry and has operated continuously since its onset. It is the third optometric residency program to be accredited. The program has graduated 164 residents since its inception. There are currently four positions available per academic year. The program is fully accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE).

In 2003, the name of the program was changed to the Dr. Irwin B. Suchoff Residency Program in Vision Therapy and Rehabilitation to honor Dr. Suchoff who was the program's first residency supervisor in 1975 and the nation's first Director of Residency Education.

## **PROGRAM MISSION:**

The residency in vision therapy and rehabilitation seeks to attract the best-qualified candidates and provide them with advanced didactic knowledge and a concentrated clinical experience in optometric vision therapy. Individuals who complete the program are expected to be able to deliver a high level of clinical care in vision therapy, serve as teachers in optometric institutions, and serve the profession of optometry as experts and leaders in the areas of vision therapy and rehabilitation.

## **CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION:**

Although this residency program encompasses both primary and advanced vision care, the emphasis is on the diagnosis and treatment of binocular, accommodative, oculomotor, and visual perceptual disorders. There are three main components of this curriculum that are emphasized throughout the year:

- **CLINICAL CURRICULUM:** The goal of this part of the curriculum is to ensure the resident has the basic and advanced clinical knowledge base and skills to diagnose and manage all clinical vision therapy cases.
- **DIDACTIC CURRICULUM:** The goal of this part of the curriculum is to provide the resident with small group seminar environment to discuss advanced topics in vision therapy/rehabilitation with experts in the field and to prepare the residents to competently participate in scholarly activities i.e., presentations, research, and papers.
  - **Advanced Lecture Series:** seminars on advanced topics in vision therapy and rehabilitation. The series is divided into 4 courses with at least 10 hours in each course:
    - Vision Therapy and Rehabilitation Orientation
    - Strabismus and Amblyopia
    - Lenses, Prisms, Filters
    - Vision Therapy and Prescribing for Special Populations
  - **Neuro-Optometric Rehabilitation Therapy Series:** weekly seminars on NORT therapy, evaluations, and practice. The seminars are a hybrid of lecture, case discussions, and hands-on practice with different techniques. This seminar will total at least 20 hours throughout the year.
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM:** The goal of this part of the curriculum has

two components:

1. To provide the resident with the experience and skills to clinically and/or didactically teach in an academic setting.
2. To prepare the resident to work in the field upon completion of the residency and to help network the resident with current leaders within the field of vision therapy/rehabilitation.

## **CLINICAL CURRICULUM:**

The clinical curriculum is designed to first establish the basic clinical competence in the following types of encounters: vision therapy evaluation/treatment, vision perceptual evaluation/treatment, head trauma evaluation/treatment, pediatric exams, infant vision exams, and children with special needs exams. Beginning in the winter quarter, the resident is given more clinical independence at the discretion of the program supervisor.

The Vision Therapy/Rehabilitation Service serves a diverse patient population which results in a rich clinical experience especially in program's focus areas of binocular vision and vision therapy. In addition to the Vision Therapy clinic, the service also includes the Learning Disabilities Unit, the Raymond J. Greenwald Head Trauma Unit, and the Low Vision clinic. Although the residents are not routinely scheduled to work in all these units, the opportunities exist if they are interested. A major strength of the program is the number of highly qualified clinical faculty, having diverse and varying philosophies, with whom the residents interact. These individuals become role models and mentors to the residents upon completion of the program.

The resident rotates through the following services at the University Eye Center (UEC) at the SUNY College of Optometry:

- o Vision Therapy/Rehabilitation Service
- o Pediatric Service
- o Primary Care Service
- o Advanced Care Service

The core of the residency involves encounters in visual skills evaluations/therapy, visual perceptual evaluations/therapy, strabismus evaluations/therapy and pediatric/infant evaluations. Successful completion of the clinical curriculum is based upon meeting the minimum number of patient encounters as listed below:

General Skills Work-ups	25 to 35
Perceptual Work-ups	10 to 20
Skills/Perceptual Vision Training	350 to 450
Strabismus/Amblyopia Work-ups	45 to 55
Strabismus/Amblyopia Training	125 to 225
Head Trauma Work-ups	50 to 60
Head Trauma Training	50 to 60
Pediatric Primary Care	40 to 50
Children with Special Needs/Infants	15 to 25
Specialty Clinics (Ocular Disease, Contact Lens, Low Vision)	25 to 35

In addition, each resident should spend a minimum of 2 sessions in vision screening of school-age children. Each resident will also rotate through the Myopia Control Clinic for one quarter. The resident's overall clinical performance should be formally evaluated at least once per academic quarter.

**DIDACTIC CURRICULUM:**

Successful completion of the educational aspect of the program involves attendance of the post-doctoral level seminars and lectures in addition to the SUNY Residency Friday Program requirements. The resident is enrolled in lectures in 4 core areas: binocular vision and treatment of strabismus and amblyopia, acquired brain injury (ABI) rehabilitation, vision and learning and case-based learning. These courses and seminars emphasize the provision of advanced clinical care for these patient populations. The didactic curriculum provides experts from both inside and outside optometry to promote interdisciplinary care. Evidence-based optometry is emphasized through the didactic curriculum to foster scholarship, an enhanced appreciation for research, and a pursuit of lifelong learning. At the end of the year, the residents take the College of Optometrists in Vision Development (COVD) Written Examination part of the fellowship process. Although passing of the examination is currently not required for successful completion of the residency program, this is considered a value-added perk of the residency program. The resident will be able to obtain fellowship status within COVD in a shortened timeframe and enhance their professional development.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM:**

The Friday Program offers specific programs to develop the resident's presentation skills, writing skills, and teaching skills. The resident has the following mandatory requirements: 1) Minor presentation, 2) Major presentation, and 3) Publishable quality paper. This portion of the curriculum ensures that the resident has the skills and resources to continue to contribute to the profession of optometry as leaders and experts in vision therapy.

To increase the resident's comfort and to encourage the resident to participate in scholarly activities, the resident is strongly encouraged to submit abstracts for poster/presentation for optometric conferences (COVD, AAO, SECO, AOA). Although not required, opportunities to participate in clinical research are available to any resident who is interested.

There are required didactic and clinical teaching opportunities for the resident. The resident will serve as teaching assistants in the third year General Vision Therapy Lab course during the fall semester. In addition, the resident serves as a clinical instructor/supervisor in the vision therapy, pediatric, and primary care services. These responsibilities are monitored and increased during the year-long program.

The second goal of this curriculum involves preparing the resident to enter the field upon completion of the residency via networking with successful practitioners within the vision therapy/rehabilitation field. This goal is accomplished in the following ways:

- Friday Program - Specific programs are provided at the offices of successful private practitioners. The practitioner lectures on an advanced topic related to vision therapy/rehabilitation. This gives the resident the opportunity to visit a practice that incorporates vision in a smaller group setting. The following practitioners have participated by hosting a Friday Program at their private practice: Drs. Leonard Press, Barry Tannen, and Robert Byne.
- Conference meeting attendance - The resident is encouraged to attend conferences to meet and network with vision therapy/rehabilitation doctors. Examples are COVD, AAO, AOA, SECO, NORA, and Eastern States Optometric Congress (ESOC).
- Curriculum vitae review - The resident's curriculum vitae is reviewed to ensure that all pertinent information necessary when applying for specific positions is included and well presented

