

A KEY STEP

BECOMING A THOUGHT LEADER IN OPHTHALMIC ADMINISTRATION

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Just over three years ago, as an active duty Navy officer, I deployed to Indonesia and Timor Leste with Pacific Partnership 2014, an annual humanitarian exercise that brings together thousands of military personnel from nations all across the Asia-Pacific region. It was on this deployment that I met Dr. Brice Nicholson and got my introduction to the world of ophthalmology.

About six months later, I left active military service to become the Chief Operating Officer and Practice Administrator of Evergreen Eye Center. Admittedly, I knew very little about ophthalmology at that time, having most recently been the assistant administrator of a military occupational health clinic. However, a key feature of military training is leadership development, and for that reason the shareholders of Evergreen had confidence that I could successfully lead the practice.

Shortly before starting at Evergreen, one of the owners, Dr. Robert Tester, made a comment that has stuck in my mind in the years since. He said, “We want Evergreen to be a leader in our industry, and part of that is having

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an administrator who is a thought leader in the world of ophthalmic administration.” As I reflected over and over on what it would take to become a thought leader in ophthalmic administration, one key step emerged: becoming a Certified Ophthalmic Executive.

THE PROCESS

With that in mind, when I attended my first ASOA annual meeting in 2015, I looked for courses that would help me build my knowledge in the COE credential’s various areas of emphasis. Since I already had some experience in finance, operations, and IT systems, I tried to focus on general ophthalmic knowledge, human resources, and legal/regulatory issues. I listened carefully in the sessions I attended. I took detailed notes and asked follow-up questions.

In addition to regular attendance (and even now presenting) at subsequent ASOA meetings,

I developed a habit of regularly reading *Administrative Eyecare* magazine, specifically looking for articles I thought would help me quickly expand my knowledge base. I made a point of frequently checking various forums on EyeMail, trying to glean information and know-how from seasoned administrators. Perhaps most importantly, I put forth the effort to spend time in our three clinics and ASC, interacting with physicians, clinical staff members, and patients.

THE PAYOFF

In late 2016, after two years at the helm of Evergreen Eye Center, I felt ready to take the COE exam. I set up my test appointment and then spent a number of weeks reviewing the COE exam flash cards and the ASOA Learning Center. As most people are, I was somewhat nervous as I took the exam, perhaps most so in the few

seconds of delay as I waited for the computer to display my results. I was grateful to see a passing score!

Now obviously just passing the COE exam doesn't make me (or anyone else) a thought leader in our industry, but what I've realized since then is this: The efforts I undertook in the process of achieving the COE credential are the same ones that, if sustained, will lead to that status. The study and then the application of key concepts builds your knowledge; the daily exposure to practice opportunities and challenges leads to professional growth. Thus, the skills learned and habits built as

you pursue COE certification also eventually make you an expert in the field, if you continue on that path. I'm not there yet, but becoming a Certified Ophthalmic Executive was a key step for me, and a distinction that continues to motivate me to pursue further growth. **AE**



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