



On the morning of Jan. 10, egregious comments shared by an ophthalmologist during a factually inaccurate segment of the “Today” show mischaracterized the primary eye health care that doctors of optometry deliver and swiftly drew the attention of and direct rebuke from the American Optometric Association (AOA).

Anne Negrin, M.D., perpetuated false statements and minimized optometry’s vast contributions to patients’ eye health and vision care, as well as general health and wellbeing. To simply say doctors of optometry are “great for prescribing glasses, contacts,” only serves to fuel patient misunderstanding of the health care providers they should be accessing for their primary eye health care, including annual comprehensive eye exams.

[In a letter to NBC](#), AOA President Robert C. Layman, O.D., admonished the show’s producers over the gross mischaracterization and urged them to correct the record in an upcoming broadcast, ensuring accurate information about optometric care is provided to the American public. The AOA is committed to asserting and advancing optometry’s primary eye health care role, and we need your help to build support for this important issue.

The AOA encourages doctors to take action by urging the producers to issue a correction. Use the following instructions to customize and submit your own letter.

1. Personalize and include your letter in the body of your email (*do not include your letter as an attachment, which can be flagged and marked as spam*).
2. Submit your email to [TodayStories@nbcuni.com](mailto:TodayStories@nbcuni.com)
3. If you have not heard from the broadcast program in two to three days, follow up with a phone call (212.664.4602) or a reminder email. If you still do not hear from the editor, send a final reminder note.
4. Consider sharing this note through your personal and professional networks, as appropriate. This could include amplifying the response.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication and contribution to the profession.

### **Template Letter For Personalization**

**SUBJ:** Response to Eye Health Segment Ft. Dr. Negrin

To the producers and journalists of the “Today” show,

I am Dr. [\[Insert Name\]](#), doctor of optometry and I recently came across the [“Today” show segment](#) on eye health featuring ophthalmologist Annie Negrin, M.D. I was appalled by the factually inaccurate definition used to characterize doctors of optometry, or optometrists, which utterly undermines our breadth of education and training as well as the essential care we provide each and every day. Dr. Negrin’s statements were incredibly misinformed and perpetuate a false understanding of our profession and role in caring for and safeguarding the public.



# AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION

At a time when delivering accurate health information is critical, the “Today” show has fallen short of that objective and missed an important opportunity to educate the public and encourage them to learn more about their eye health and the doctors caring for it.

As America’s primary eye health care providers, doctors of optometry are on the frontline of eye and vision care—which goes well beyond examining vision acuity to prescribe glasses or contact lenses. We examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the eye. We serve patients in over 6,500 communities, in half of which we are the only eye care providers. We provide more than three quarters of first-time eye care visits and two-thirds of all primary eye care nationwide. We also play an important role in the management of systemic diseases with ocular manifestations including diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, autoimmune diseases, and neurologic disease.

I urge you to issue an updated, accurate definition that portrays who doctors of optometry are and the essential care we deliver. I have provided the American Optometric Association’s definition below for reference.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Best,

[Insert your name here]

Doctors of optometry (O.D.s/optometrists), recognized as physicians under Medicare, are essential health care providers on the front line of eye and vision care. They examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the eye. In addition to providing eye and vision care, they play a major role in an individual’s overall health and well-being by detecting systemic diseases, and diagnosing, treating and managing ocular manifestations of those diseases, and providing vaccinations.

Doctors of optometry also:

- Prescribe medications, low-vision rehabilitation, vision therapy, spectacle lenses, contact lenses and perform certain surgical procedures.
- Counsel patients regarding surgical and nonsurgical options that meet their visual needs related to their occupations, avocations and lifestyle.
- Complete pre-professional undergraduate education in a college or university and four years of professional education at a college of optometry, leading to the doctor of optometry (O.D.) degree. Many doctors of optometry complete an additional residency in a specific area of practice.