

AOA 2021 Public Awareness Campaign:

Patient recruitment guidelines

As part of the American Optometric Association's 2021 campaign, we are looking for doctors and patients who would be interested in sharing their stories. **Personal stories are one of the most impactful tools we have when it comes to encouraging patients and the public to seek care and prioritize their health.** Real-life examples combined with expert commentary allow the conditions being highlighted to be humanized and help them understand the value of regular eye care.

The two main areas where these stories are critical are (1) media interviews and (2) creating content for our channels.

Types of media

Traditional media

Traditional media is any form of patient story that is collected and shared by a reporter/journalist and printed in a newspaper/magazine or published online. Media interviews are pitched and coordinated by Yakesha Cooper, AOA Public Relations Manager and our public relations agency, Edelman.

AOA's website and social media

The AOA leverages our website and social media channels to share resources, information and patient stories. While we're active on Facebook ([American.Optometric.Association](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanOptometricAssociation)), Twitter ([AOACONNECT](https://twitter.com/AOACONNECT)), Instagram ([americanoptometricassociation](https://www.instagram.com/americanoptometricassociation)) and LinkedIn ([American Optometric Association](https://www.linkedin.com/company/american-optometric-association)), Instagram and AOA.org are our primary channels where patient stories will be shared. Content could be shared as a video, blog post or photo on social media.

Role of doctors of optometry

As the care provider, you play an integral role in both sharing your expertise and helping to collate patient stories. Whether it is an ongoing issue being managed or a rare case you discover, you are the foremost expert in your patient's condition and treatment. When collecting stories for media pitching or being interviewed by a journalist, it is important that you are able to share your first-hand account and be positioned as the expert.

Patient perspective

If a patient is interested in sharing their story, they may be asked to join a call with our public relations agency, Edelman, to be interviewed. Pending interest from media and patient comfort level, they may be asked to provide direct quotes or be interviewed by a reporter. Any interviews would also be staffed by Edelman to provide support.

Types of patients to look for:

- We are interested in hearing all impactful patient stories whether it be diabetes being identified for the first time, coaching a patient through contact lens issues or finding a brain tumor. A broad spectrum of stories can influence consumers to take their eye health seriously and seek regular care.

Our preference is when both the doctor and patient are comfortable being identified in stories

- Having both the doctor and patient identified helps provide full context and increases the ability for the story to be shared in multiple forms (print, video and social). With both parties identified, the diagnosis and importance of care is humanized for consumers.
- **Example:**
 - **Patch:** [How a Comprehensive Eye Exam Found a Brain Tumor and Saved an Eight-Year-Old Girl's Life](#) + [Video from Satellite Media Tour](#).

However, we appreciate patients may not always want to be publicly identified.

- In most cases, this can be worked around in a traditional media process with use of a pseudonym or speaking about the patient in general terms like “a teenage boy” or “a woman in her mid-40s”.
- **Example:**
 - **USA Today:** [Surprising things an optometrist sees during an eye exam](#)

Next steps

If you have a patient in mind, here are some steps you can take to start sharing their story:

- Let them know you're a member of the AOA, an organization for doctors of optometry that aims to educate the public on eye health and its role in your overall health.
- The AOA is always looking for interesting patient stories to help educate the public on the importance of routine eye care and seeing professionals regularly. Patient stories are some of the most impactful tools we have when it comes to encouraging others to seek care.
- Let them know that sharing their story doesn't always mean being identified, if they would prefer to be anonymous, that is very manageable.

If the patient is interested:

- **Please contact AOA's Public Relations Manager, Yakesha Cooper (ycooper@aoa.org), with a brief overview of the story or stories you're interested in sharing.**
- Yakesha and/or the Edelman team will begin the process by speaking to you directly to hear the patient story and ask questions. They will run through the program in more details and answer any questions the doctor or patient may have.
- **Once fully informed, the patient can decide if it's something they're interested in participating in.** From there, Edelman will plan out what channel the story is best suited for. Edelman will be your main resource throughout the process and can answer any questions or concerns you have ahead of any interviews or content development and as it is published.