

practitioners. Nine optometrists participate in the Gouveneur program.

An example of the single-discipline group practice is the Optometric Center of New York City with which I am affiliated as director. Forty-six optometrists, specialists in every phase of the visual sciences, represent a unique community facility and the largest single-discipline group practice in optometry in the United States.

Educators and practitioners of every health discipline are today acutely aware of the remarkable, exciting, and challenging revolution in the knowledge of health sciences. New facts are being assembled, new theories postulated, new methods and techniques offered for the improvement of health care. The rapid rate of growth has led to greater dependence of one practitioner upon another. The desire to bring more care, care in greater depth, and the kind of care which places added emphasis on the monitoring of quality standards, has greatly influenced the concept of group practice.

In his statement before this committee earlier in the month, HEW Under Secretary Cohen noted the country's population growth and the correlated increasing demand for health services. To meet this demand he cited the Health Professions Educational Assistance Act which Congress passed to increase the supply of available health manpower; this legislation includes optometrists. I would like to add that the 1965 amendments to this act afford partial forgiveness of loans to those students of medicine, dentistry, and optometry who, upon graduation, establish practices in areas critically short of health manpower. Congress further recognized the shortage of qualified vision care specialists by including optometry in the loan forgiveness provision.

H.R. 9256 will afford these same health professionals the opportunity to establish practices in well-equipped offices in functionally constructed buildings to the benefit of their patients. The group practice lends itself especially to the care of our older citizens who might otherwise have to travel exhausting distances to keep appointments with various health practitioners. This is especially true in rural and suburban areas.

The vision care needs of the country's population rank high on the list of health needs. Optometry is the profession specifically trained and licensed in all the States and the District of Columbia to care for vision. By way of background for the subcommittee, the minimum requirements for the education of optometrists are at least 2 years of preprofessional undergraduate college work in liberal arts and basic sciences followed by 4 years of professional education leading to the degree, doctor of optometry (O.D.). All of the schools and colleges confer this degree. In addition, five institutions maintain research oriented graduate programs leading to a master's degree in physiological optics and three programs lead to a Ph. D. in physiological optics and they comprise the major source of these research practitioners.

As the vision needs of the citizens increased through the years, optometry developed certain specialties. For example, at the Optometric Center of New York we have optometrists who specialize in vision training, some of whom work only with children's vision needs; others deal with the problems of people who have only limited sight;