

President's Insights February 2026



March 8 marks International Women's Day.

It is inspiring to see so many women Optometrists who are leaders, and making a meaningful impact across the world—both within VOSH/International and throughout the broader field of Optometry. Research has also shown that women are among the most compassionate healthcare providers, a quality that strengthens our profession and the communities we serve.

For this month's President's Insights, I invited several women optometrists to reflect on the following questions:

Why did you choose Optometry?

What do you personally like the most about being an Optometrist?

From about the age of 7, I knew I wanted to help and was called to improve people's lives in some way and volunteer overseas. As time went on, I realized that healthcare, specifically Optometry, was the way for me to improve the world both with my day-to-day professional life and volunteer work.

I feel privileged to be able to realize my dream.

Optometry is a flexible profession. I was able to balance my professional career, my volunteer life, and my family life with my OD husband while raising my two now-grown children. Optometry has many modes of practice, and working in Nursing Facilities fits well with my family schedule and enabled me to care for an underserved population. Vision is one of our greatest human gifts, and I am honored to be able to help bring clearer vision to people around our world.

Feel inspired by reading the insights of my VOSH colleagues.

Victoria Molnar Weiss, OD, FVAO, FVI
President

I chose optometry because it felt like the perfect intersection of medicine, precision, and human connection. Vision is such a fundamental part of how we experience the world, and I was drawn to a profession where I could make an immediate, tangible difference in someone's daily life.

Over time, what deepened that commitment was realizing how much systemic disease presents in the eye- it's not just about sight, it's about your overall health! I loved the idea of practicing at the medical level while still building long-term relationships with patients and serving communities that may not otherwise have access to care.

What I love most is the combination of problem-solving and purpose.

Every day feels intellectually engaging, whether I'm managing glaucoma, identifying subtle retinal findings, or co-managing complex cases. But it is also deeply personal. I value the trust patients place in us. There's something incredibly meaningful about helping someone see clearly again, or catching something early that truly changes their outcome. Beyond the clinic, optometry has also given me a platform for leadership and service through organizations like VOSH. Being able to use my skills both locally and internationally reminds me why I chose this path in the first place.



Ani Tokhmakhian, OD, FAAO, Dipl ABO-USA
VOSH/International Board of Directors

I became an optometrist because many of my family were EENTs and Ophthalmologists. I knew I wanted to provide patient care but not in a surgical setting. I volunteered in an optometry office first year of University and was delighted to see patient care without surgery!

The doctors seemed so happy in their profession and clean! What I enjoy most is the patient relationships, especially after 40 years of caring for 3 generations of families in my community.

The problem solving is so much fun as well. I also have always loved to travel and see the world and as a 40 year VOSHer I have had a life time of providing care to so many who otherwise would not have had access to any vision care.



Ann Slocum-Edmonds, OD, FVI - USA
VOSH/International Board of Directors
Chair VOSH Fellowship (FVI) Committee

I chose Optometry because it allowed me to combine healthcare and service in a very personal way. Vision is deeply connected to learning, independence, and quality of life, and I was drawn to a profession where I could make a real, lasting impact -especially for children and families without vision care. As a woman, I also saw optometry as a field where I could grow professionally, serve my community, care for my family and build a meaningful career grounded in compassion.

What I love most about being an optometrist is the human connection. Every patient has a story, and being able to improve someone's vision often improves their confidence, productivity, and overall well-being. After 25 years in practice, it's incredibly fulfilling to see families trust me with their eye care. On International Women's Day, I'm especially proud to be a woman in healthcare -using my knowledge, experience, and empathy to empower others to see the world more clearly, both literally and figuratively.

Strong women shape the future--and help the world see it better.



Beatriz Elizabeth Gómez Serna, B.Opt. Dipl. Ed. - Mexico
VOSH/International Board of Directors
Data Digitalization Project Lead

I chose Optometry because I grew up inspired by my mother, who is an optometrist. Having her own clinic, I witnessed firsthand how she balanced her profession and our family life with dedication and grace. She managed our household, took care of us, and at the same time served her patients with commitment and compassion. Seeing how she positively impacted people's lives while being a strong and present mother motivated me to follow the same path. I aspire not only to become an optometrist like her, but also to embody the same passion, responsibility, and heart that she shows every day.

What I appreciate most about being an optometrist is the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in people's lives, particularly those in marginalized communities. Providing access to proper eye care and vision correction can significantly improve a person's quality of life, productivity, and confidence.

Community service has always been close to my heart, and I strongly believe that healthcare should be accessible to everyone. As I often say, "It's more fun in the community," because working directly with people in outreach settings allows me to connect with them on a deeper level and witness firsthand the impact of our profession..



Jennifer Lyn Galvez Viñola, OD, M.Ed. – the Philippines
VOSH/International Board of Directors
Board lead for Asia

I was originally drawn to optometry as a teenager when I accompanied my father to his annual exam and learned that systemic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension could be seen within the eye. I was amazed that such a small organ could be so complex, interesting, and important! After shadowing many health professions, I found optometrists seemed to have great relationships with their patients and a special ability to positively impact their lives.

Working in pediatrics, of course I get so much joy when my patients exclaim "I can see!" excitedly as I show them their first prescriptions. I take personal pride in knowing my specialized skills can ultimately improve the health of the next generation. Additionally, as a mother of three, I am grateful to have a profession that allows me flexibility to spend time with both my family and my patients.



Kirsten D'Aversa Johnson, OD—USA
VOSH/International Board of Directors
Technology Transfer Program Committee Chair

I chose optometry because it combines healthcare and the human connection. Vision is such a vital component of our daily lives and how we experience the world, and I am grateful to provide such an impactful service to my patients.

I love being able to connect with my patients, learn about their lives, and tailor solutions to their individual needs. One of my most favorite aspects of being an optometrist is having a skill that I can use for service as well. I appreciate VOSH for offering me the opportunity to help communities with limited access to eye care.



Neelam Patadia, OD, FAAO - USA
VOSH/International Board of Directors
Ambassadors Program Chair

Curiosity led me to choose optometry. I was always intrigued by how babies see and how their vision is assessed, the causes of myopia and the scientific basis of vision. Optometry suited me perfectly because it provided the tools and knowledge to explore these questions and to apply that understanding in clinical practice.

What I value most is the opportunity to empower individuals through vision. Restoring or enhancing sight has an immediate and profound impact on education, employment, safety and dignity. Beyond the clinical work, I deeply appreciate optometry's collaborative nature of working with other health professionals and teachers to expand access to sustainable eye care. This combination of personal impact and systemic transformation is what makes the profession so meaningful to me.



Tuwani Rasengane, OD, PhD, FAAO -South Africa
VOSH/International Board of Directors
Board lead for Africa