

The cover features a dark background with a large, glowing oval at the top containing the title. A diagonal rainbow-colored beam of light cuts across the center, with the subtitle 'Focusing on The Future' written along it. In the bottom right, a hand is visible holding a rectangular object that reflects the rainbow light. The overall theme is futuristic and technological.

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Focusing on The Future

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— New CRA Considerations —

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THE BOARD OF CERTIFICATION OF THE Ophthalmic Photographers' Society recently adopted new eligibility requirements for the Certified Retinal Angiographer (CRA) examinations. For the first time, formal education will be recognized within the CRA eligibility requirements. This change in policy is the culmination of over three years of work by a BOC committee charged with reviewing eligibility requirements.

This committee, chaired by Philip K. Chin, CRA, COMT, worked in consultation with educators in both photography and the allied health professions to develop this policy. Many factors were considered in order to recognize the major avenues of entry into our profession. The committee first determined whether or not the recognizing of formal education would necessitate the reviewing of each curriculum, and in effect accrediting education programs. The committee also came to a consensus on the definition of work experience and how work experience factored into the measurement of competency.

Historically, there has been little or no formal education available in ophthalmic photography. By necessity, ophthalmic photographers learned a majority of their skills on the job. For this reason, the CRA program has always included work experience as an eligibility requirement. Originally the requirement was set at one year of on the job experience. It was changed to two years when a statistical review of the examination results suggested the need for an increase. Increased formal educational opportunities in ophthalmic photography have necessitated another review of the CRA eligibility requirements.

After careful consideration, the committee felt that the Board of Certification has neither the authority, or the resources to accredit a degree in ophthalmic photography. The Board of Certification will, however, recognize documented formal education or professional achievement in ophthalmic photography or either of its major components: photography and ophthalmology.

While acknowledging the value of education as a strong foundation on which to develop skills, the committee recommended that actual work experience still be required of all candidates for certification eligibility. The consensus of the committee, the Board of Certification, and experts in the field is that clinical experience is an essential component of a certification program that recognizes competence in retinal angiography.

The portfolio requirements, along with the written and performance examinations, allow a candidate to demonstrate knowledge of the principles and the practice of fundus photography and fluorescein angiography with cooperative patients. When producing a portfolio, the candidate has the ability to choose photos from the ideal, most cooperative patients while showing the camera skills needed in these controlled settings. The work experience requirement is essential to ensure that the candidate has had the opportunity to develop, through experience, the clinical judgment, decision making, and patient management skills necessary for safe, reliable performance of fluorescein angiography — especially under the less than ideal conditions routinely encountered in ophthalmic photography. Eligibility for CRA examination is contingent upon fulfilling these requirements:

1. A letter from the employing physician or institution addressed to the Chairman of the CRA Section verifying the candidate's employment history as a Retinal Angiographer for a minimum of two years. *This work experience should include the tasks listed in the "Explanation of Professional Qualifications of a Certified Retinal Angiographer," found in the CRA Program Guide.

The two year work experience requirement is meant to allow enough time for a candidate to acquire, through hands on experience, the knowledge and skills necessary to perform fundus photography and fluorescein angiography. More importantly, it should include enough patient interaction to allow a candidate to develop the clinical judgment and patient management skills necessary for competent performance as a retinal angiographer. A competent retinal angiographer must be able to elicit cooperation from non-cooperative or challenging patients for acceptable performance of rapid sequence fluorescein angiography. A competent retinal angiographer should be able to recognize and react to medical and photographic complications during fluorescein angiography.

*Documented formal education or professional achievement in Photography, Ophthalmology or Ophthalmic Photography may be used as a substitute for up to one year of the work experience requirement. An official transcript or a photocopy of a JCAHPO certificate must be submitted for documentation.

Work experience substitutions will be granted in the following increments:

- Associate Degree in Photography or Certified Ophthalmic Assistant (COA) – 3 months work experience
- Bachelor's Degree in Photography or Certified Ophthalmic Technician (COT) – 6 months work experience
- Bachelor's Degree in Biomedical Communications or Certified Ophthalmic Medical Technologist (COMT) – 9 months work experience
- Bachelor's Degree in Biomedical Communications (with advanced elective in Ophthalmic Photography) or Bachelor's Degree in Ophthalmic Photography – 12 months work experience

*Internships or co-ops are considered part of a formal education program. These clinical experiences will not qualify as work experience.

2. Current certificate in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
3. Submission of a satisfactory portfolio.

For more information on the Ophthalmic Photographers' Society or the CRA program, contact the OPS office at 800-403-1677 or E-mail: OPSMember@aol.com

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OPHTHALMIC PHOTOGRAPHERS' SOCIETY

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