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**California's first certified ophthalmic education program, one of only 13 in the nation,  
debuts at USC Roski Eye Institute**

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LOS ANGELES– The [University of Southern California \(USC\) Roski Eye Institute](#), will offer the first educational program in California, one of only 13 programs nationwide, to train certified ophthalmic technicians with its [Ophthalmic Technician Education Program \(OTEP\)](#) beginning January, 2017.

Certified ophthalmic technicians (COT) are an integral part of the eye care team working with ophthalmologists, patients and families in a growing yet still relatively unknown health care career path. The USC OTEP will create highly skilled allied health professionals who guide patients and families on understanding their vision conditions, ensure compliance with treatment protocols and conduct various tests and procedures that inform ophthalmologists in the diagnosis and treatments of eye diseases and vision conditions. The 21-month program includes academic coursework as well as clinical setting training from experts at the USC Roski Eye Institute, a Top 10 nationally ranked ophthalmology program by *U.S. News and World Report* for more than 20 years.

“Vision health requires a team of experts working collaboratively and certified ophthalmic technicians combine the clinical, managerial and social components needed for the optimum eye care patient experience,” says [Joseph Coccozza](#), assistant professor of research at USC Roski Eye Institute and co-director of the OTEP program. “Our program brings needed training to California and helps to address the shortage of health care professionals, especially for older eye care patients. It also offers an attractive career path for our nation’s veteran population.”

“Our program offers students an unprecedented educational experience not only working alongside some of the nation’s top vision experts at USC Roski Eye Institute but also gaining the hands-on training from our USC ophthalmologists at one of the busiest trauma centers in the country through our exclusive affiliation with L.A. County+USC Medical Center as well as addressing pediatric eye health through our affiliation at the prestigious Children’s Hospital Los Angeles,” says [Rohit Varma, MD, MPH](#), director of the USC Roski Eye Institute and dean of the [Keck School of Medicine of USC](#). “We’re proud to bring this educational opportunity to students at USC and lead the West Coast on training the next generation of eye care technicians.”

According to [the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), there is a growing demand for ophthalmic technicians, especially with the increasing number of older Americans who experience visual impairment such as glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration, cataracts and other eye health issues. Research conducted by the USC Roski Eye Institute shows that the [prevalence of visual impairment and blindness will double by 2050](#) based on aging U.S. population statistics.

To learn more or apply for the Ophthalmic Technician Education Program (OTEP), visit: [USCEye.org](http://USCEye.org) or [click here to view the video](#).

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### **About the USC Roski Eye Institute**

The USC Roski Eye Institute, part of the Keck Medicine of USC university-based medical enterprise, has been a leader in scientific research and innovative clinical treatments for more than 40 years. Among the top two funded academic-based medical centers by the National Eye Institute (NEI) research grants and ranked in the Top 10 ophthalmology programs in *U.S. News & World Report's* annual "Best Hospitals" issue for more than 20 years, the USC Roski Eye Institute is headquartered in Los Angeles with clinics in Arcadia, Beverly Hills and Pasadena.

Patients from across the country come to see the USC Roski Eye Institute experts who treat a comprehensive array of eye diseases across the life spectrum from infants to aging seniors. The USC Roski Eye Institute is known for its scientific research and clinical innovation including: creation of the Argus retinal prosthesis implant (also known as the "bionic eye") for retinitis pigmentosa patients; stem cell therapies for those who have age-related macular degeneration; discovery of the gene that is the cause of the most common eye cancer in children; treatment for eye infections for AIDS patients; inventors of the most widely used glaucoma implant in the world; pioneers of a device for long-term intraocular drug delivery; and the first to use telesurgery to train eye doctors in developing countries. For more information visit: [USCEye.org](http://USCEye.org).

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