

Lester Caplan Award

Candidate Name: Chelsia Park, OD

Position Title: Optometrist, Chief, at Taos Picuris Service Unit

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Proposed citation: Dr. Park's Indian Health Service career is a steady and persistent force, taking on additional duties and projects to improve and increase services provided while passionately caring for her patients' needs. She has mentored technicians and other optometrists in training, while advancing the quality of practice and efficiency of operations. I give my highest recommendations to Dr. Park for the Lester Caplan Award  
Recommended by CDR Chris Cordes

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I would like to enthusiastically nominate Chelsia Park, OD for the Lester Caplan Award. Since joining the Taos Picuris Service Unit (TPSU) December of 2017, she has been an unrelenting advocate for elevating the quality of eye care. Her ceaseless work ethic has allowed her to re-build and re-structure the Optometry Department; expanding services to patients of our region. Through her understanding and flexibility with the current needs of the clinic, her initiatives have made a profound impact on the patients at the TPSU. With her high level of efficiency while seeing, scheduling, and referring patients, she has also been able to lend support to other departments and take on additional responsibilities to benefit the mission of the TPSU and IHS.

Since the inception of the Taos Picuris IHS, there was never a full time eye care provider. Eye care was offered once a week or per month by a contractor over the past several years, and the scope of service was limited to only routine visits. The quality of the equipment and the facilities were limited due to never having a full time eye care provider. A majority of patients were referred privately for their eye care and management of their chronic eye conditions. When Dr. Park joined TPSU team, she brought a wealth of experience and knowledge from working at the Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility balancing patient care with administrative duties such as scheduling and referrals. Taking in feedback from her patients, and tribal members that she met at the Taos Pueblo Health and Wellness Fair, she has made it a priority to ensure that patients feel welcomed by revamping the scheduling templates to ensure same day open access is available for general, diabetic, chronic, urgent, and emergent eye care. In turn, her adjustments made to scheduling have lowered no show rates from 37.3% in calendar year 2017 to 23.1% in CY 2018, while more than doubling the number of patient encounters during that same time period.

She uses every opportunity to grow her patient base by reaching out to the members of the community by calling patients to introduce herself and new optometry services. In addition, she remains cognizant of her patients' needs, and goes the extra length and dedicates the time to ensure their satisfaction with their eye care. Her collaboration and outreach with the Taos Pueblo Day School, NM Lions Club, and Headstart Program to encourage earlier eye exams has made a visible impact by increasing the number of pediatric patients seen in the Optometry department.

She is a highly effective planner, and executes her projects thoughtfully while planning for potential set-backs. In the short period she has been with us, she has established new policies and procedures for the clinic. She has presented on and relocated the optometry department from the outside annex trailer to the main clinic during multiple executive committee meetings. By having the Optometry department, within the medical clinic, she has met goals of increasing patient accessibility and safety, allowed for increased ease of support/eye consultation to medical providers, reduce falls risks, and from a fiscal perspective, maximize cross utilization of staff such as MSAs and health techs during times of critical staffing. Since the Optometry Clinic move, it has been well received by patients and staff.

In addition, the scope of optometry services continue to expand after relentless data collection and presentations she has delivered to justify the need for additional equipment for the management of our patients' chronic eye conditions. Upon arriving, she began to keep meticulous referral logs, tallying the numbers of patients that needed to be referred out for additional ancillary testing. It was problematic considering how many patients were sent out in the past, resulting in a loss of clinic revenue and increased purchased referred care funding. After persistently advocating for additional ancillary equipment for patients with chronic eye conditions, the clinic now is able to provide full scope eye care with a HVF, OCT and B scan unit.

During a time of critical staffing, she was also assigned to perform the Diabetes Audit for the TPSU. This report allows a facility to focus on areas for improvement and develop programs to better address the quality of diabetes care that is provided. Although unfamiliar with the process, she approached this with an open mind and accepted the task readily due to the opportunity to contribute to the needs of the clinic. What this involved



was learning the DMS/RPMS and iCare system, and performing the tedious task of updating the diabetes registry which hadn't been updated for the past three years. In addition, she used this as an opportunity to review the diabetes registry to contact and schedule patients into her clinic that were not up to date with their diabetic eye care. After identifying that many of her patients had limited understanding of diabetes and the impact on their eye health, she met with the tribe's diabetes educator, community health representative, and a few other tribal members and performed an educational presentation on Diabetic Retinopathy at the Picuris Pueblo.

Using her vision, she is reshaping the program from the bottom up, and has done a tremendous job in improving the quality of care and providing eye care for members of the TPSU.

Prior to TPSU, Dr. Park, has made valuable contributions during her career at IHS. At the Chinle Service Unit (CSU), she balanced staffing duties of providing routine, urgent/emergent, and after hours eye care, with her duties as the Residency Coordinator where she successfully led the reaccreditation of the Ocular Disease Residency program at CSU. She has also put forth great effort in promoting a career with the IHS by speaking to optometry students and prospective residents by participating in Midwestern University Residency Day Panel, and tabling at Residency Day at the American Academy of Optometry. She has been heavily involved with optometry residency mentorship, didactic teaching and organizing the residency program curriculum. She has contributed to staff and hospital wide education by performing CSU Med Staff CME lectures, presenting at CSU journal clubs, and training technicians by presenting in-service trainings at the CSU and assisting with organizing and lecturing at the Navajo and Albuquerque Area IHS Technician meeting. In regard to the clinic operations, she has made contributions by updating several clinical guidelines, monitoring the optometry ward stock including orders for cryopreserved and desiccated amniotic membranes, performing customer service improvement projects and surveys, and worked with pharmacy to write guidelines for autologous serum drops and fortified antibiotics to streamline ordering and dispensing to patients. She has also trained staff on the use of DICOM/VISTA imaging for electronic uploading of OCT and VFs while working with IT to communicate any trouble shooting issues. Lastly, she provided specialty contact lens services as at the Pinon Health Center, fitting patients who had suboptimal vision in spectacles with mini scleral lenses.

Dr. Park's career within the Indian Health Service has been a steady and persistent force, taking on additional duties and projects to improve and increase the scope of services rendered while passionately caring for her patients' needs one at a time. She has mentored technicians and other optometrists in training, while advancing the quality of practice and efficiency of operations at the clinics she has served in, and it is thereby I give my highest recommendations to Dr. Park for the Lester Caplan Award