Ophthalmologists underrepresented in Google searches

26 October 2022

“Google search of the phrase 'eye doctor near me' may underrepresent ophthalmologists, potentially undervaluing the role ophthalmologists play as eye care professionals,” the authors write. "Ophthalmologists may want to pursue search engine optimization to try to achieve balanced representation online."


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In most U.S. counties, a Google search of the phrase "eye doctor near me" may underrepresent ophthalmologists, according to a study published online Oct. 20 in JAMA Ophthalmology.

Rebecca R. Soares, M.D., from Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia, and colleagues examined how well ophthalmologists are represented in a Google search of the phrase “eye doctor near me.” The analysis included geographic coordinates for 2,955 county centroids in the United States (June 30, 2021), with the top 10 sites and three Google map links assessed.

The researchers found that the overall mean proportion of ophthalmologists from the Google search of all counties was 4,726.97 of 16,345.93 (28.91 percent), which was less than the real proportion of optometrists (15,778 of 41,975; 37.58 percent), yielding a difference of 8.67 percent. Google underrepresented ophthalmologists in 35 of 52 states and territories (67.3 percent).