

# InfantSEE: Scoping Out the National Application of this Public Health Program

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## Abstract

The goal of this research was to explore the reasons behind those choosing not to participate in the InfantSEE program in an effort to help guide the AOA in program improvements. Comprehensive eye examinations are important to ensure adequate visual abilities and prevent amblyopia. When vision disorders are left untreated, developmental delays and learning barriers can occur, leading to poor school performance. A survey was created using Survey Monkey and distributed to alumni of U.S. optometry schools and members of U.S. optometric state associations.

## Introduction

The American Optometric Association (AOA) has created a remarkable program available to all infants between six and twelve months of age. Since its introduction in 2005, over 100,000 infants have received care through InfantSEE, finding that one in ten had a vision problem that was previously undetected. InfantSEE provides infants with a no-cost, comprehensive eye examination which can potentially flag a sight-threatening problem and allow early intervention to prevent future damage and vision loss. In order to ensure this program is being utilized to its full potential, marketing and expansion is imperative. Amblyopia is the fourth most frequent form of blindness in the United States, and is also the most serious preventable vision disorder affecting children. An important aspect of the InfantSEE exam is evaluation of refractive error to ensure emmetropia is occurring. This allows detection of common risk factors for amblyopia so that treatment can be initiated and the chances of vision loss are minimal. Early infant examinations are vital in detecting and treating preventable disease when vision is most pliable.

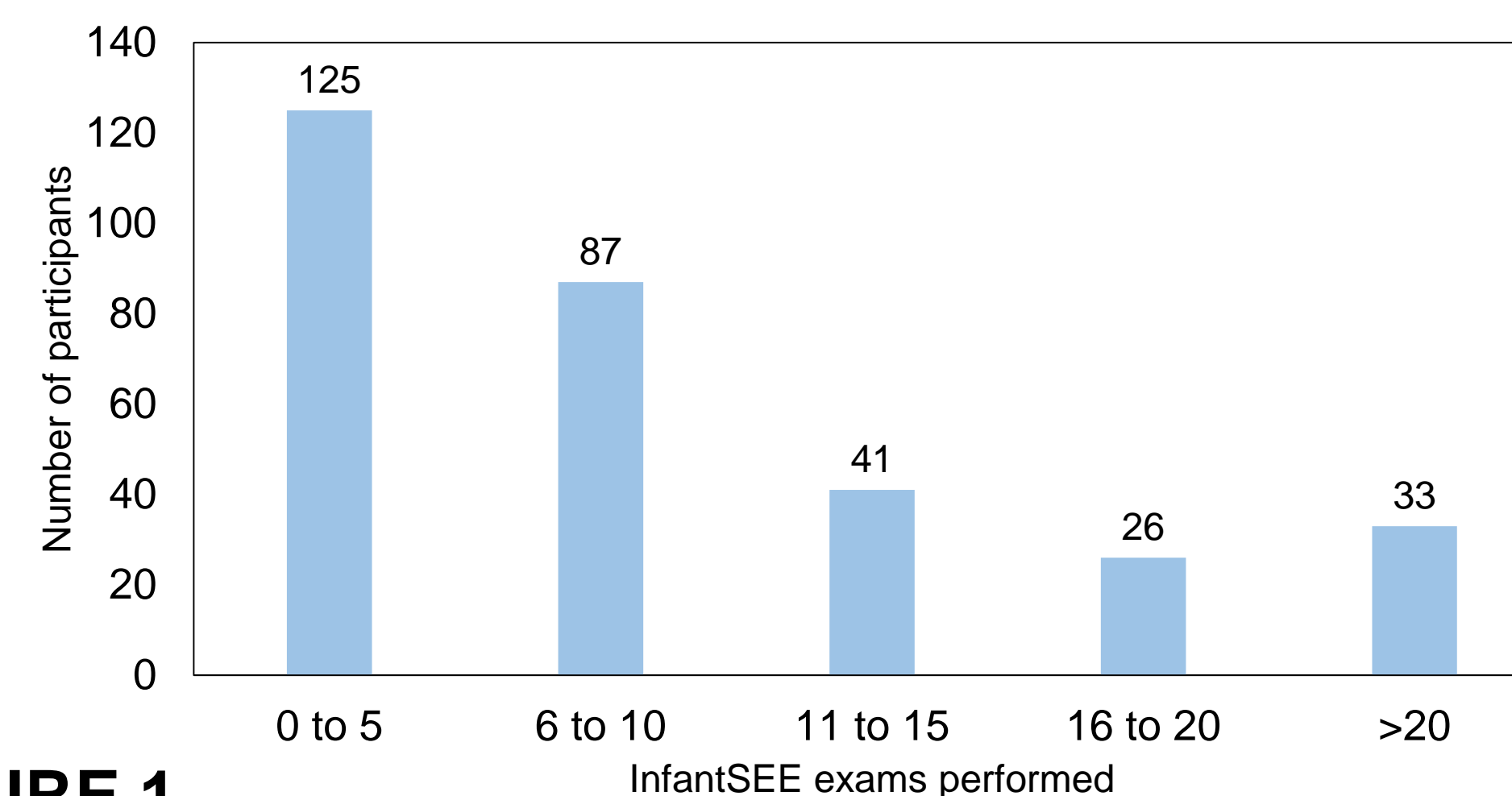
Age (mo)	Spherical equivalent (D)
1	+2.00
6	+1.75
12	+1.50
18	+1.25
36	+1.00
48	+1.00

**TABLE 1.** Emmetropization from birth to 4 years of age, when cycloplegic.

## Methods

A twenty-two question survey was created via Survey Monkey and emailed to all twenty-two U.S. optometry schools, all fifty U.S. optometric state associations, and shared by friends and colleagues on social media websites. Each optometry school and state association's primary correspondent was asked to distribute the survey link to their alumni or members. Survey Monkey collected and compiled the responses into separate categories to be analyzed. Categories of interest were:

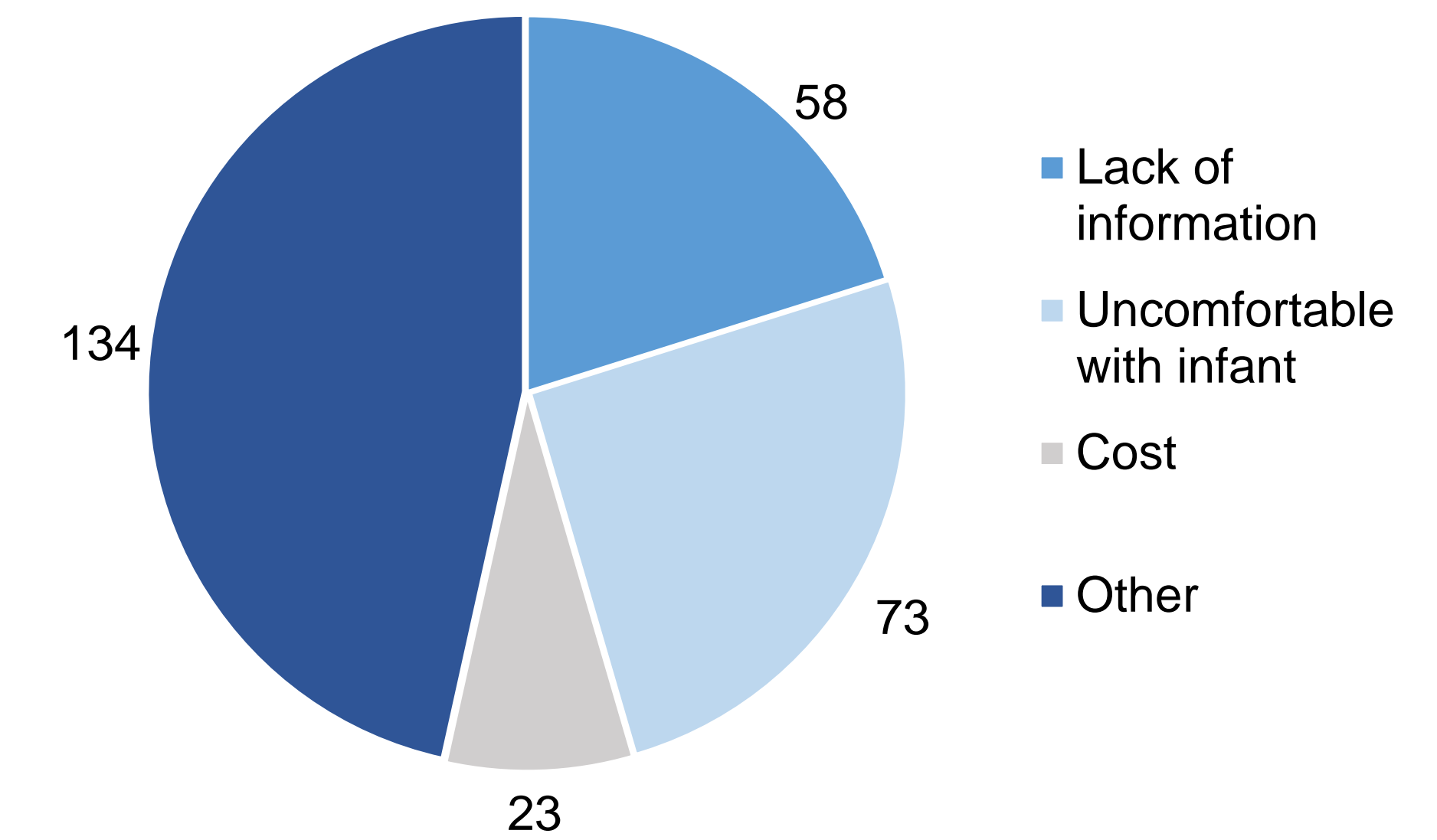
- Years practicing optometry
- Percentage of subjects who feel qualified to be a provider
  - Participation in InfantSEE program
  - Number of InfantSEE exams performed per year
- Number of infant exams performed per year by non-providers
- Percentage of ocular disease diagnosed in InfantSEE exams
  - Primary InfantSEE marketing strategy
  - Primary source of infant exam confidence
  - Reasons for not participating in the program



**FIGURE 1.** Number of InfantSEE exams performed per year by subjects.

## Results

572 optometrists participated in the survey. The majority of subjects have been a practicing optometrist for >20 years (32.7%), followed by 0-5 years at 30%. Although 82% of respondents felt qualified to perform infant examinations, only 55.7% of subjects are registered InfantSEE providers. The number of InfantSEE exams performed per year by providers is summarized in Figure 1 above. Of those that are not providers, the majority (78.4%) perform 0-5 infant exams per year. 97% of providers stated that 0-5 cases of treatable ocular disease are diagnosed each year during InfantSEE exams. Marketing strategies most utilized are in-office displays (50%) and social media (23%). 39% stated that they do not market being an InfantSEE provider. Confidence for becoming a provider was mostly gained by seeing patients (76%). Reasons for choosing not to be an InfantSEE provider are summarized in Figure 2.



**FIGURE 2.** Non-InfantSEE providers were asked why they choose not to participate in the program.

## Discussion

InfantSEE is a unique program, but doctors seem to be polarized about its perception. In our survey, some praised the program and how it helps children, families, and communities. Others criticized it due to the no-cost option as well as lack of promotion and public awareness. Because of practice location or modality, some are limited to become InfantSEE providers. As InfantSEE celebrates its 10th anniversary, there are many reasons to celebrate-- such as the 10,000 babies per year on average who receive care. Yet struggles persist, such as the issue with growing the program to support the four million babies born per year, keeping up with the Affordable Care Act changes, or continuing to educate optometrists on providing care to our youngest patients, the ease at which it is done, and the value it brings to the practice. Just as babies need guidance to enhance their development, we hope the InfantSEE program can utilize the information provided in this study to continue to grow and develop to help millions of babies in the next ten years.

## References

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