



Amanda Turner | *COE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT*

Austin Retina Associates, Austin, TX

13 years in ophthalmology

Tell us about yourself and your current role:

I currently serve as the Director of Operations at Austin Retina Associates, where I oversee clinic operations, patient services, and revenue cycle management across 11 locations, supporting 18 physicians, including 2 fellows. I've been with the organization for 13 years, and my career here began on the front lines as an ophthalmic technician. From there, I transitioned into a team scribe role for one of our physicians, working closely with him for four years. I then spent five years as a clinic manager before stepping into my current role. This journey has given me a deep appreciation for every layer of our organization and allows me to lead with a strong understanding of both the clinical and operational realities our teams face. My role allows me to focus on operational excellence, leadership development, and building systems that support both our teams and the patients we serve.

What drew you to the specialty and the pathway to your role?

I was drawn to ophthalmology because of the direct impact we can have on patients' quality of life. Vision care is deeply personal, and I quickly fell in love with the blend of patient care, technology, and teamwork. My pathway evolved naturally as I became more curious about the "why" behind operations and leadership, which led me to pursue progressive leadership roles over time.

What inspired you to pursue the COE certification?

I pursued the COE certification as a way to deepen my understanding of ophthalmic leadership and validate my experience in a structured, meaningful way. I wanted to ensure I was leading with both confidence and competence while continuing to grow professionally.

How did you prepare for the exam or training process (study methods, resources, mentors)?

I prepared by using resources available through ASOA's website, along with the COE flashcards, and by applying what I was learning to real-world situations in my daily work. I also leaned on my mentors and peers to help deepen my understanding of the sections I felt least comfortable with, which was incredibly valuable throughout the process.

What was the most challenging part of preparing for the exam?

Balancing study time with a demanding leadership role was the biggest challenge. It required discipline, prioritization, and sometimes studying during less-than-ideal hours, but it was absolutely worth it.

What advice would you offer to those considering sitting for the exam?

Trust the experience you already have. Much of the exam content connects directly to real-world scenarios, so use your day-to-day work as a foundation for studying. Identify your weaker areas early, seek out resources and peer support, and approach the process with consistency rather than perfection.

How has achieving this certification impacted your professional development?

Earning the COE helped me feel more confident in the decisions I was already making and gave me a clearer way to think through new challenges. It helped connect a lot of dots and reinforced best practices that I now use every day when supporting our teams and making operational decisions.

In what ways will this certification benefit your team, patients/clients, or the organization?

This certification allows me to lead with greater clarity and consistency, which ultimately benefits our teams and the patients they serve. Strong leadership creates stable systems, engaged employees, and better patient experiences, and that ripple effect matters.

What motivates you to continue pursuing learning and professional development?

I'm motivated by the belief that better leaders create better workplaces. Continuous learning helps me show up more effectively for my team and model the growth mindset I encourage in others.

How did you celebrate after earning your certification?

I celebrated with my family and with the mentors and peers at work who helped me study and cheered me on along the way. It was a really meaningful moment to pause, reflect on the journey, and appreciate how much their support made a difference.

Who supported or inspired you most along this journey?

My mentors and peers in the ophthalmology community, along with my leadership team, were incredibly supportive throughout the process. Their encouragement, accountability, and belief in me made a huge difference. Outside of work, my husband is my biggest cheerleader, constantly encouraging me and reminding me to keep going, especially on the days when balancing everything felt challenging.

Outside of work and professional learning, what do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my husband and our two boys (ages 7 and 3), traveling, and reading. Taking time to recharge helps me stay balanced and show up as my best self at work.

What is next on your professional development journey?

Looking ahead, I'm focused on continuing to grow as a leader while helping develop the next generation of leaders within our organization. I really enjoy creating opportunities for others to grow and seeing people gain confidence in what they're capable of.