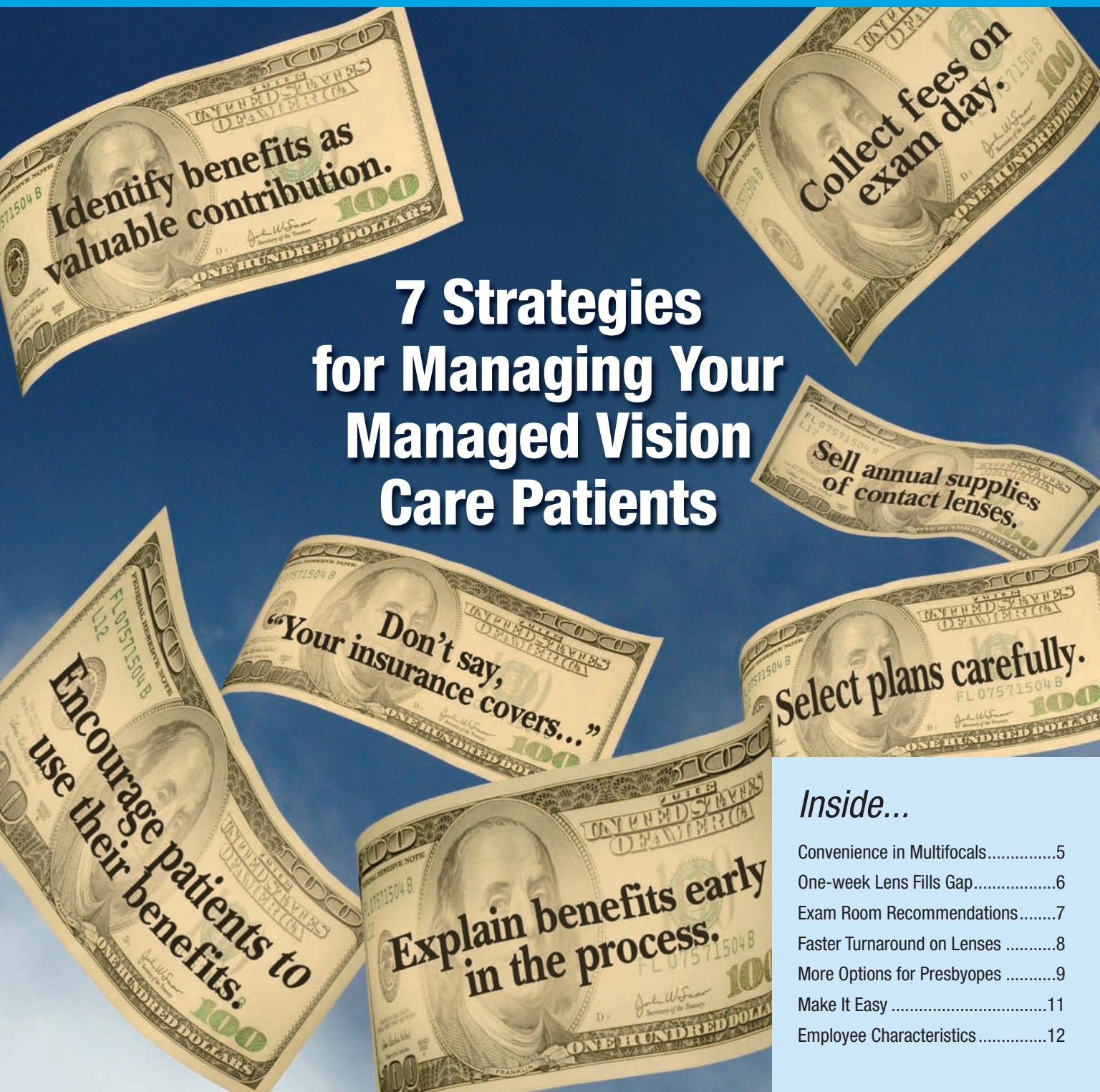


The Profit Advisor

Business Strategies for ABB OPTICAL GROUP Customers

7 Strategies for Managing Your Managed Vision Care Patients



Inside...

Convenience in Multifocals.....	5
One-week Lens Fills Gap.....	6
Exam Room Recommendations.....	7
Faster Turnaround on Lenses	8
More Options for Presbyopes	9
Make It Easy	11
Employee Characteristics	12

Performance for Top 500 Accounts Reflects Trends

In the three years that ABB CONCISE has collected benchmarking data on its 500 top-performing accounts, several interesting trends have emerged.

The first trend noted was that the contact lens product mix is shifting, a trend in line with national industry data. In 2012, one-in-five contact lenses dispensed by the top 500 accounts were daily disposable contact lenses. That modality saw the

lenses saw a significant drop in three years. In 2010, two-week contact lenses accounted for more than 45 percent of the typical product mix; by 2012, that segment was down to just under 32 percent.

Daily disposable, monthly replacement and specialty contact lenses, such as multifocal and toric lenses, carry a higher profit margin for the practice than two-week contact lenses.

76 percent. ABB OPTICAL GROUP makes online ordering simple. Practice staff can place items ordered in a virtual shopping cart and send all the orders with one push of a button later in the day. Staff is notified immediately should a contact lens be out of stock so that the patient can be notified or the doctor can come up with an alternative. The online process can save minutes per day compared to preparing faxes or waiting for a telephone consultant to help with the order. ABB OPTICAL GROUP anticipates that the percentage of orders placed online will continue to grow and soon become the predominant method of ordering for all practices.

Type of contact lens	2010	2011	2012	Three-year change
Daily disposable sphere	12.0%	16.6%	20.2%	up 68.0%
Two-week replacement sphere	45.1%	36.6%	31.9%	down 29.3%
Monthly replacement sphere	16.6%	18.8%	18.1%	up 9.0%
Multifocal	4.5%	5.5%	6.2%	up 37.0%
Toric	17.0%	18.8%	20.1%	up 18.2%
Colors	4.2%	3.6%	3.4%	down 19.0%

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

largest overall increase, 68 percent, over the three-year period. Multifocal contact lenses also saw a large upswing, even though the overall numbers remain relatively small at 6.2 percent of the average contact lens mix. Considering that the number of presbyopes in every practice is likely to continue to grow, this contact lens modality represents an enormous opportunity for most practitioners.

Two-week replacement spherical contact

Best practice: There are two ways to boost the profitability of contact lenses even more: make sure you're taking advantage of ABB OPTICAL GROUP bank and bulk pricing and promote annual supplies.

Another area that saw considerable change in three years is the method by which the top 500 accounts placed their contact lens orders. In 2010, 61 percent were placing orders online, but by 2012, that was up to

Order Placement	2010	2011	2012	Three-year change
Online	61.0%	73.0%	76.0%	up 24.6%
Phone/Fax	39.0%	27.0%	24.0%	down 38.5%

Best practice: Ask your ABB OPTICAL GROUP representative for a demonstration of online ordering if you're unfamiliar with it. You'll save your staff time with every contact lens order.

The third category that has seen some shift—but has significant room for additional growth—is the way in which orders are shipped. In 2012, 74 percent of practices were having contact lenses shipped to the practice. Unless these are products replacing annual supply purchases made on the day of the exam, shipping contact lenses to the practice is not the most efficient way to handle the process. When contact lenses are shipped directly to the patient's home or work address, the transaction involving your staff is completed on the day of the exam. Having contact lenses shipped to the practice means that a staff member will have to open and inventory the shipment and call patients at least once and maybe more often to let them know their contact lenses have arrived. When the patient does arrive, it often means interrupting time with another customer to hand over the contact lenses.

Order Shipment	2010	2011	2012	Three-year change
Ship to patient	23.0%	24.0%	26.0%	up 13.0%
Ship to office	77.0%	76.0%	74.0%	down 3.9%

Best practice: Offer every patient who doesn't purchase an annual supply out of your inventory the convenience of having the contact lenses sent directly to his or her home or office. Minimize ship-to-office products to replace only those contact lenses that have been sold from your inventory. ●

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7 Strategies to Managing Your Managed Vision Care Patients

Managed vision care doesn't have to be a profit drain; employ these strategies to make these patients a valuable annuity for your practice

By Angel Alvarez



Angel Alvarez

Over the past 20 years, the percentage of total practice revenue that independent eye care practitioners (ECPs) receive from private-pay patients has declined steadily. In fact, American Optometric Association surveys show that 80 percent of optometric patients are covered by managed care plans.

Half of U.S. adults are enrolled in vision benefit plans, and millions more are covered by government programs or have vision benefits as part of a medical insurance plan. This means that third-party payers exert an uncomfortably powerful influence on the financial performance of independent ECPs. Third-party control over reimbursements is one of the largest potential threats in the external business environment facing eye care practitioners. The good news is that when active strategies are pursued to maximize revenue from patients with vision benefits, the threat becomes manageable.

Vision plans set limits on professional fee reimbursements and on the amount of product purchases that are covered. Often the product allowances cover only a very basic pair of eyeglasses, which most people don't want to wear, or just a half-year supply of contact lenses.

Insurance allowances may appear to limit patient choice or steer them to mature technology. The limitations and complexity invite patient misunder-

standing, disappointment, resentment and distrust. Because allowance structures are complicated and constantly changing, few patients investigate them. Patients' wishful thinking makes them assume that everything is covered by their insurance.

This patient-unfriendly situation cries out for active management by ECPs. It does no good to curse the insurance companies or blame them for skimpy reimbursement. It's better to shape realistic patient expectations and to turn vision benefits into an incentive to visit the practice more often and to purchase products that may otherwise be a stretch for some patients' budgets.

"Astute ECPs implement marketing campaigns to remind vision plan patients to take advantage of their benefits every year instead of letting them go to waste."

—Alvarez

A change of mindset about managed care helps. Begin to think of managed care as an annuity for the practice, not as a profit drain.

Here are some ideas to gain control of managed care.

1. Encourage patients to use their benefits. Different plans provide different benefit schedules, but most pay for a yearly eye exam. Yet only a small percentage of patients enrolled in vision plans use the benefits they help pay for and actually have a yearly exam. Patients tend to return to an ECP for an eye exam only when they need new eye-

✓ Tip Make Patients Feel Good About Their Plan

Say something encouraging about the patient's vision benefits plan. Say, "You're lucky that you can use this benefit on any frames you want. It's like everything is \$___ off for you, so pick something that you'll want to wear every day." Or, "It's great that your vision plan covers an annual eye exam. Can we go ahead and schedule one for you and any family members now for next year?"

glasses or when their contact lens supply is exhausted. Astute ECPs implement marketing campaigns to remind vision plan patients to take advantage of their benefits every year instead of letting them go to waste. Plan benefits make yearly preventive eye care affordable, assuring a lifetime of good vision. Another benefit of a yearly eye exam is that it shortens the product-purchase cycle.

2. Make sure patients understand their benefits. Explain insurance benefits at the start of an office visit. A best practice is to verify each patient's insurance allowances before he or she arrives for the exam and to explain the benefits at the start of the visit. That eliminates misunderstandings and provides the context to position benefits properly.

3. Identify vision benefits as a valuable contribution, not all-inclusive. A script should be developed that explains to patients that vision benefits are structured to cover only basic requirements, not pay the entire cost of eye care.

Continued on page 4

✓ Tip Don't Forget the Family

Remember that the patient's family members probably have the same benefits. Ask if you can schedule appointments for other family members so that they can take advantage of this benefit, too.

Practice Differentiation

ABB CONCISE's Consultation Team Attends Specialty Contact Lens Educational Workshop

ABB CONCISE's specialty contact lens consultation team attended a two-day fitting clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz., sponsored by Paragon Vision Sciences. The consultation team had an opportunity to fit and observe the GP Signature Design Lenses on patients with irregular corneas and presbyopia.

Rich Jeffries, director of sales and new business development for Paragon Vision Sciences, was responsible for coordinating the fitting clinic with **Stephen Cohen, OD**, a Scottsdale practitioner, and six of his patients. The consultation team fit and observed different lens designs on these patients and discussed both the pros and cons during the fitting evaluation with Dr. Cohen and **Patrick Caroline, FAAO**, director of contact lens research at Pacific University College of Optometry.

Dr. Cohen said, "It was a fascinating experience to work with these talented consultants and to be able to see firsthand how they analyze and troubleshoot. I have always felt that the ABB CONCISE consultants were an asset to my practice. Participating in this training program helped to show me why and how they are such assets to me, my practice and my patients."

Caroline provided advanced training on the fitting characteristics of the ICD 16.5 scleral lens

for irregular corneas. He said, "Contact lens technology is an ever-changing science with new insights and understanding emerging on a daily basis. Once a year, the consultants at ABB CONCISE and our research team at Pacific University meet

"Participating in this training program helped to show me why and how [ABB CONCISE consultants] are such assets to me, my practice and my patients."

—Dr. Stephen Cohen

for a weekend of concentrated education and discussion on a wide range of contemporary topics related to contact lens design, fitting techniques and problem-solving strategies."

The annual consultation meeting began with **Tim Koch**, senior professional services specialist at Contamac US, who presented new advances in specialty soft contact lens fitting options. He reviewed the advantages of the Definitive silicone hydrogel, a material designed to be lathe-cut and allows new options for high astigmatic patients with no compromise on permeability or parameters. The fitting characteristics of the KeraSoft ICD, a revolutionary soft lens designed for keratoconus and other irregular corneas, were the primary focus of this discussion.

"This educational program is not only an indication of how much ABB CONCISE invests in having one of the best-trained, highly skilled consultation teams in the industry, but it is indicative of how truly committed these consultants are to practitioners and their patients by offering the most advanced designs and services to promote practice growth and patient care," said Jeffries.

To obtain more information about ABB CONCISE's GP Signature lenses and extensive designs of specialty custom soft lenses including KeraSoft ICD in the Definitive Silicon Hydrogel material, contact the ABB CONCISE Contact Lens Consultation team at 800-772-3911 option 4. ●

Cover Story

Continued on from page 3

Benefits make a valuable contribution, enabling purchase of the high-performance products that most patients prefer. "With your vision benefits, think of it like you're saving \$___ on any frame you want."

4. Don't say, "Your insurance covers..."

Never start a conversation by leading patients to products covered by their insurance benefits. While

it's natural for staff to worry about patients' pocket-books and to try to limit their out-of-pocket cost, this is a certain method to reduce patient satisfaction and practice revenue. Staff should be reminded constantly to present first what will best satisfy individual patient's needs, not the option that insurance will cover in full.

5. Sell an annual supply to contact lens patients.

While that's a good rule for all contact lens-wearing patients, it's particularly important for those with vision benefits. Patients with an allowance for a six-month supply of soft lenses should be encouraged to purchase an annual supply. Usually the additional out-of-pocket outlay for an annual supply is quite small, after the manufacturer rebate and any annual supply discount are deducted. Always spell out the savings.

6. Collect co-pays or out-of-pocket costs on exam day. In some cases, it may not be clear what a

patient's vision plan will cover. A best practice is to estimate the patient's total out-of-pocket charge and invoice it on exam day rather than attempt to collect a balance after payment is received from the insurance company. That situation is ripe for dispute and non-payment. If patients are occasionally overcharged, refunds can be issued.

7. Be selective on which insurance plans to accept.

Some plans offer smaller reimbursements, have limitations on product choice or have a higher rate of claims rejections. Some plans may have only a small percentage of your patients enrolled. At least twice a year, the revenue per patient enrolled in each accredited plan should be calculated as a basis for eliminating some plans.

An important first step to maximize revenue from patients with vision benefits is a thorough review of current communication processes. That will lead to structuring a consistent explanation of benefits that will assure patients obtain an ideal, personalized solution to their needs, as well as one that yields an acceptable return to the practice. ●

✓ Tip Spell out the Savings

Any time that you can show patients the savings achieved through their vision benefits, it enhances their perception of value. Say, "Between your vision benefits, the manufacturer's rebate and our in-office discount for an annual supply, you're getting a tremendous value for these excellent contact lenses."

Daily Disposable Multifocal Contact Lens Expands Options for Wearers

Since its introduction to patients through an open house event last September, the lens has been making an impact

Starting about a year prior to the release of the Proclear® 1 day multifocal contact lenses, **Shelley Williams, OD**, started telling her presbyopic patients that a new innovation was on the way. "Our patient base is very progressive," she says. "Each year when patients come in for their annual exams, they ask us what's new." The bar has been set high, and patients expect to hear about and try new products regularly from Dr. Williams.



Dr. Williams

Anticipation grew, and once the Proclear 1 day multifocal contact lenses became available, Dr. Williams immediately started prescribing them for presbyopic patients in her Columbia, Mo., practice. The contact lens matches the convenience of a daily disposable contact lens to the Proclear® material that she likes so much. "The Proclear material is comfortable even for dry eye patients, and many patients can wear the contact lenses for at least 14 hours comfortably," Dr. Williams says. The material is sturdy, not floppy like some other daily disposables that Dr. Williams has encountered. That ease of handling is convenient and important for presbyopic patients who may struggle to see the lens during insertion.

Last September, Dr. Williams held an open house to introduce her patients to the Proclear 1 day multifocal contact lenses. Her CooperVision representative joined her to share the ins and outs of the new lens technology, the latest offering in the lineup. "CooperVision's contact lenses are always a good quality, and I've never come across a product from the company that was subpar," she says. Over the 20 years of her career, she's worked with many of the company's other contact lenses, including torics and monthly replacement modality, and she likes the consistently good quality. The Proclear 1 day multifocal contact lenses provide her patients with crisp, clear vision at near, mid-range and far distances, and Dr. Williams says she has a 90 percent success rate with fitting this contact lens.

This contact lens is also having a positive impact on her business. Dr. Williams says her percentage

ACTION PLAN

Create Your Own Product Launch

Patients of Dr. Shelley Williams like hearing what's new. So to highlight the launch of the Proclear® 1 day multifocal contacts, she invited her CooperVision representative into the practice for an open house event. By introducing the community to the new contact lenses in this way, Dr. Williams and her representative could answer questions, address concerns and set expectations without the time constraint of the regular exam schedule.

Patients were excited to learn that they would be able to experience clear vision, even while transitioning their focus from a computer screen to a cell phone to the demands of driving at different times of day. ●

of daily disposable wearers is growing; now, about a third of her contact lens wearers are wearing a daily disposable contact lens. Patients become accustomed to the convenience of a daily disposable contact lens and like that they can have a clean lens every day that remains comfortable even on dry eyes. That convenience remains important to them, even as presbyopia advances.

Dr. Williams encourages patients, especially those new to multifocal contact lenses, to be patient and to understand that making adjustments at a follow-up visit is completely normal. Nearly 25 percent of Dr.

Williams' contact lens patients wear a multifocal contact lens, so it's an easy transition to make if the patient is already wearing another brand. The staff is very comfortable and familiar with the products to help patients through the fitting process and beyond. Contact lens technicians can field phone calls and troubleshoot the situation efficiently, often without having to take Dr. Williams away from her patients in the office.

What began as an option for mostly full-time multifocal contact lens wearers evolved into an introduction to contact lenses for patients who would like to trade in their eyeglasses or readers once in a while. The 30-pack makes it easy for patients to buy a smaller amount if they want to wear multifocal contact lenses just on the weekends, when they

go out or when they travel. It's so simple to demonstrate the improved vision with these contact lenses with a trial pair that many patients agree that it would be nice to have contact lenses once in a while, she says. And once patients have experienced the vision, convenience and comfort, some of these patients may choose to switch to full-time wear.

In just one year, the Proclear 1 day multifocal contact lenses have made a big impact on her business. She says, "These contact lenses have filled a big niche market for presbyopic patients, who have been wanting a daily disposable for a long time." ●



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Initial Skepticism Turns to Satisfaction

Doctor finds one-week replacement lens gains a solid footing in his practice

When **Jeffrey Palmer, OD**, of Middletown, Conn., first heard that Hydrogel Vision, Inc., was introducing Icuity H₂O™, a one-week replacement contact lens, he wondered how it would fit into his dialogue with patients. He had been steering patients to daily disposable contact lenses and one-month replacement lenses, although he still has a substantial number of patients in two-week replacement lenses. "I like some contact lenses in each of those categories," he says.

But he also likes Hydrogel Vision's Extreme H₂O® material, so he was willing to give the Icuity H₂O contact lenses a try. He went to his toughest patients—those who were complaining of comfort even in highly wettable contact lenses. "These were problem patients, and they virtually all did well," he says.



Dr. Palmer

compliance that makes patients not try to wear it much longer than that. The lens comes in two base curves (median and steep),

allowing the doctor to attain an optimal fit. Best of all, it moves nicely on the eye. "Unlike with some silicone hydrogel contact lenses that fit tightly on the eye, we see very

good movement with this contact lens."

Dr. Palmer says it's an excellent lens for those silicone hydrogel contact lens wearers who seem to be unable to maintain longer-term comfort with their lenses. It's also an excellent option for patients whose eyes are red or who complain of any contact lens-related discomfort. "It doesn't take much to push patients over the edge if they're not delighted with their contact lenses," he says. "I fit the weekly Icuity H₂O lens, which is a non-silicone hydrogel, 59 percent water lens, on my most difficult patients, and it works very well."

He also tried it with some of his most satisfied patients. "I did some side-by-side comparisons with patients who were very successful in their current lenses, and in most cases, they went

ACTION PLAN

Suggest a Different Option

Here are some contact lens patients who might be excellent candidates for a weekly replacement contact lens option with Icuity H₂O™ lenses.

- Patients who have dryness, comfort and vision issues as the day progresses
- Patients who can't wear their lenses a full day
- Patients who can feel the difference when putting on a new lens
- Patients who have physiological issues such as buildup, giant papillary conjunctivitis or microbial keratitis
- Patients who don't want to incur the cost of a daily disposable

A Lens for Small Corneas

Whenever **Dr. Jeffrey Palmer** sees patients with smaller eyes, he reaches for the Extreme H₂O® 54% lens, which is also available in a 13.6 diameter. "For children, new patients with smaller eyes and many Asian patients, this is an excellent lens. For kids, this is my go-to lens." •

Dr. Palmer credits several characteristics of the lens. It's a thin lens with a very thin edge, which makes it extremely comfortable. The lens also strikes the balance between having enough body to make it easy to handle the 14 or so times that it's handled for the week and a built-in

with the Icuity H₂O, too," he says. Those results have surprised him. He knew the optics were excellent, and he has always appreciated the Extreme H₂O material, but he says even his Extreme H₂O patients prefer Icuity H₂O. "It's a different kind of lens."

While Dr. Palmer at first wondered how patients would react to the new one-week replacement option, he's found good acceptance and compliance. "Patients have an affordable option between

"There's a very nice balance to the number of contact lenses and the price."

—Dr. Jeffrey Palmer

the pricier silicone hydrogel contact lenses and the pricier daily disposable contact lenses," he says. The annual supply price with the manufacturer's rebate is comparable to two-week contact lenses—yet patients leave the office with twice as many contact lenses and a replacement schedule that's even easier to remember. "There's a very nice balance to the number of contact lenses and the price."

Dr. Palmer says that he anticipates that his Icuity H₂O patients who will start returning for their next annual exam since switching to this newer lens will want to stay with it. "I think a weekly replacement option is a good one. Although the daily disposable contact lens wearers who switch will need to go back to using a contact lens care solution, they're finding that they don't wear the Icuity H₂O lenses long enough to build up lipids and debris to the point that it will cause a problem." •

Back from the Brink

Dr. Jeffrey Palmer recently saw one frustrated patient—an engineer—who had nearly reached the point of giving up on contact lenses. "I had tried many brands of lenses with this patient, and we couldn't find an optimal fit that balanced comfort and acuity when varying lens designs, base curves and materials. We tried the Icuity H₂O™ median lens, and it was amazing. The lens fit well, and the optics were terrific. The patient was thrilled. This was not an easy patient to fit, but the Icuity H₂O lens was a problem-solver." •



Streamlined for Success

About five years ago, **Steven Bennett, OD, FAAO**, decided to make a change in the practice that his father founded more than 60



Dr. Bennett has been able to bring dropouts back into contact lens wear.

years ago. The contact lens technicians in his two Ann Arbor, Mich., offices eliminated all of the trial contact lenses that were not used on a daily basis. "It takes a while to get used to, but it streamlined our contact lens practice and increased our contact lens profits," Dr. Bennett says.

A focus on prescribing contact lenses from fewer manufacturers was made easier thanks to Alcon's family of contact lenses, which meets the needs of so many of Dr. Bennett's patients. "I like that the company has a family of products so that you can fit spherical, toric and multifocal contact lenses, as well as daily disposable contact lenses," he says. This one-stop shopping saves time and has eliminated clutter in the office. "All of Alcon's contact lenses work incredibly well, which has made it very simple to fit and order."

In fact, DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® contact lenses have become a top choice for Dr. Bennett, and he makes it easy for his patients to say yes to trying this option after he explains the advantages of daily disposable contact lenses over other replacement schedules. "I would recommend a daily disposable contact lens for these reasons," Dr. Bennett says to patients in the exam room, elaborating on the specific benefits for their lifestyle. One patient might be most interested in the opportunity to have a fresh, sterile contact lens each morning, while another might want to hear about a contact lens that doesn't require cleaning. While not every contact lens will work for every person, Dr. Bennett is proud of the high success rate he's had with the DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® brand contact lenses.

There are so many great candidates for daily disposable contact lenses, it's no surprise that approximately 45 percent of his patients wear this type of contact lens. As a matter of course, Dr. Bennett

prescribes daily disposable contact lenses for adolescents. "It's a safe option for them," he says, and parents don't need to worry or micromanage the care process. Along with young patients and first-time contact lens wearers, Dr. Bennett recommends this lens for frequent travelers and athletes. "Many of these patients had dropped out because of the hassle of caring for contact lenses or complaints about their contact lenses feeling dry, and they do very well with daily disposable contact lenses," Dr. Bennett says. Some decide to use the daily disposables full time, and others appreciate the convenience of wearing contact lenses for a game of tennis. "They love that."

The daily disposable replacement schedule is ideal for patients and the practice. There's no confusion as to when to replace the contact lenses, since each pair is thrown away at the end of the day. Dr. Bennett doesn't need to worry that these patients are straying from his cleaning and lens care instructions, because there aren't any to remember. And from a practice standpoint, the design of the DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® brand contact lenses encourages compliance^{††} with its unique polymer designed specifically for comfort for one day of wear. Moisturizing agents are blink-activated and gradually released over 20 hours.

Dr. Bennett always prescribes an annual supply of contact lenses, which will last patients until their next annual exam. The practice preappoints patients,



ACTION PLAN

Wording for the Wise

Dr. Steven Bennett knows that an open-ended question is often the key to an honest conversation in the exam room. "Many doctors or staff ask patients, 'Are you interested in contact lenses?' but if a patient says no to that question, you have nowhere to go," Dr. Bennett explains. "I ask, 'Have you ever thought about wearing contact lenses?' When you ask this way, the patient pauses and thinks and will often tell you a story." Maybe the patients had experienced uncomfortable wear in the past or was told he or she had astigmatism and couldn't wear contact lenses. Dr. Bennett now has the opportunity to set the record straight, because he believes that even happy patients want to know that he follows the trends of his profession. "You don't have to make changes, but let me tell you what's new," Dr. Bennett says to his patients. "My objective is to give you the newest and best products." ●

and the depleting contact lens supply also serves to remind patients that their annual exam time is approaching. "Selling a year's supply is more profitable, and then you get the patient back a year later," Dr. Bennett says. "It's a win-win for everyone," because the patient doesn't need to worry about shopping around or running out of contact lenses before a next appointment.

With the valuable rebates available for an annual supply and no further need for cleaning solutions, patients realize that there isn't much of a price difference compared to the contact lenses they wore previously. ●

^{††} Compliance with manufacturer-recommended replacement frequency

See product instructions for complete wear, care and safety information. **Rx only**

Your Voice Counts

Four practices, two ABB CONCISE accounts and two ODG accounts, were the winners of a \$100 Amex gift card in 1Q. ABB OPTICAL GROUP surveys a group of customers quarterly to gauge how well it meets customers' expectations of service. These surveys help direct new programs and offerings. And completing the survey puts your practice in the running for the quarterly gift card. The winners are Vision Clinic at Foxhill in Greeley, Colo.; Kentucky Eye Care in Louisville; Cheaper Peepers of East Meadow, N.Y.; and Optic Vue of Las Vegas. ●



Stocking Ophthalmic Lenses Creates New Avenue of Practice Revenue

When **Mark Gottlieb, OD**, of Sharper Vision Optical in Duluth, Ga., became an ABB OPTICAL GROUP account about a year



Dr. Gottlieb

ago, he did so primarily for the savings and convenience of one-stop shopping for contact lenses. However, his staff members told him that the distributor also offers a range of ophthalmic lenses. So he looked into that option and realized that there were tremendous advantages for

his patients and his practice.

First of all, the ophthalmic lenses he orders through ABB OPTICAL GROUP are high-quality lenses. That's important, because Sharper Vision Optical prides itself on carrying a wide variety of well-known and sought-after frame lines. He wants patients to be content for a long time with their fashionable frames, the quality of their vision and the comfort of their vision.

That's one reason Dr. Gottlieb is an advocate of no-glare lenses for all of his patients. "No-glare lenses provide better, clearer vision, especially at nighttime or in low-contrast environments. They also prevent glare from being reflected back into the eye. The result is less eye strain," he says

Because the ophthalmic lens options from ABB OPTICAL GROUP are affordable, he now carries a larger supply of lenses in stock. With his computerized edging equipment, "we now have the opportunity to make new eyeglasses for patients in less than an hour," he says. "It's a huge benefit and convenience for the patient, and there's also a savings for

Maximizing Managed Vision Benefits Through Second-pair Sales

Once a patient is in your optical dispensary ready to purchase eyewear, it's worth a little nudge to encourage that patient to buy multiple pairs of eyewear. Those subsequent pairs require no additional chair time and very little additional time from your optical staff.

Even if a vision plan requires that you use a certain lab for the first pair, remember that any subsequent pairs don't carry those same stipulations. By asking patients questions throughout the exam, doctors can recommend the best vision correction solution for the patient. Rarely is that just one option. It could be backup eyewear for contact lens wearers or a pair of computer eyewear or other eyewear for special needs that the patient might have. Or maybe the patient is having a difficult time deciding between two frames.

By reminding patients that their vision benefits plan is providing them essentially a cash benefit toward any eyewear that they want, patients start to see the value. By creating an incentive within the office to encourage patients to purchase more than one pair of eyeglasses, you can leverage that benefit even further.

That's valuable—not just right away, but for the long term. Patients with managed vision benefits tend to use those benefits. With an effective system for recalling patients for their annual exams, you can increase both the profitability and satisfaction of your managed vision care patients. ●



Why stop at one pair? Encourage and entice patients to purchase multiple pairs of eyeglasses.

us." Not only is there the cost-of-goods savings from bulk purchases, but there are the additional savings of being able to complete more jobs in-house instead

of ordering from a local lab. That also means that his opticians are contributing to the bottom line more effectively. In fact, by ordering his ophthalmic lenses from his distributor, Dr. Gottlieb says the optical dispensary has added a new revenue center.

Dr. Gottlieb passes some of these savings along to the patients. "Patients have the ability to get a discount on their initial order of eyeglasses or on a second pair if they have insurance," he says. And he's established a discount program for patients who have no vision benefit plans, too. The savings are detailed on his web site, with savings offered for both professional services and product sales.

While patients appreciate a discount, they're typically more excited about the quality and the fast turnaround. Dr. Gottlieb maximizes patients' enthusiasm for their new eyewear by being able to deliver it quickly. Children and adults are happy to hear that, in many cases, the frames they just selected will be ready as new eyeglasses later that day. As the optical dispensary continues to bolster its reputation through optical frame fashion events, it's increasingly important that the practice delivers on that enthusiasm. ●

New Look for ABB OPTICAL GROUP Publications

Regular *Profit Advisor* and *Soft Lens Retail Price Monitor* readers will recognize some changes in these quarterly issues. Most notably, they reflect the new look of the ABB OPTICAL GROUP logo, designed to bring together the elements of ABB CONCISE and ODG under a new umbrella. For ODG accounts, welcome to this quarterly publication that delivers ABB OPTICAL GROUP news as well as features ABB OPTICAL GROUP members who share their success with products and strategies delivered by the vendor supporters.

As the merger progresses, you will see a more integrated approach to ABB OPTICAL GROUP communications to its accounts as we develop the synergies that come from combining these two successful companies.

For the near future, you will continue to do business with the representatives and order from the catalogues you know. Just as ABB CONCISE and ODG took pride in delivering quality services at competitive prices, ABB OPTICAL GROUP will continue to build on these strengths and bring even more innovation to bear. The eye care practitioner remains at the center of all of these efforts as we work toward making you even more competitive and profitable.

Be assured that as ABB OPTICAL GROUP consolidates its services and offerings, you will be the recipient of the best of both worlds. As the time comes to transition to new products, ABB OPTICAL GROUP consultants and representatives will be there to help you every step of the way. ●

Reliable, Simple Options Make Fitting Multifocal Contact Lenses Convenient

When John Meyers, OD, graduated from optometry school, the idea of providing better near and intermediate vision for his presbyopic patients was terrific in theory. But in practice, fitting multifocal contact lenses wasn't always easy or rewarding.



Dr. Meyers

That has changed over the years, as contact lens materials and designs improved. Today, by using multifocal contact lenses from Bausch + Lomb, Dr. Meyers is able to fit nearly every interested presbyopic patient in his Port Richey, Fla., practice successfully. As a result, the multifocal contact lens component of his practice continues to grow, and Dr. Meyers believes there's still room for additional growth as the candidate pool expands and as presbyopic patients are spending more time in front of a computer, cell phone, e-reader and tablet computer.

"I have confidence in the SofLens® Multi-Focal and the PureVision® Multi-Focal lenses because between the two of them, we can take care of many patient types," Dr. Meyers says. The PureVision Multi-Focal is a natural progression for contact lens wearers already wearing PureVision or PureVision2 contact lenses that are starting to experience the symptoms of presbyopia. "That's an easy transition."

With its two add powers, the vision correction with PureVision Multi-Focal contact lenses can be fit easily,

"I use the low-low add combination for early presbyopes and the high-high add combination for those requiring a higher reading power. The high-low add mix has worked well in my practice across many patients, using the low add power for the dominant eye." Dr. Meyers recommends following the fitting guide.

The PureVision Multi-Focal can be fit efficiently for a first fit, and as presbyopia advances and the patient's reading needs increase, the add power can be increased without having to start over with a new fitting process.

Both the SofLens and PureVision Multi-Focal contact lens designs use negative spherical aberration to create a center-near add. The result is crisp vision at all distances, he says. With his experience fitting these contact lenses, Dr. Meyers says the



chair time, even for first-time multifocal contact lens fits, is barely longer than a spherical contact lens fit.

The ease of fitting these contact lenses means that Dr. Meyers can introduce the idea of multifocal contact lenses to every candidate. He doesn't have to prescreen patients because he is confident that in just a few minutes, he can select multifocal lenses that they can try for a week. Although these patients may require a follow-up visit to tweak the distance or near portion of the prescription, he often finds that his first-fit rate of success is high. "That's why I fit so many. Most people are interested in achieving

the best vision," he says. "I'm already thinking about which contact lenses I'm going to select as we're finishing up the exam."

Dr. Meyers says there is a lack of awareness of multifocal contact lenses. "I often have presbyopes who have no idea that this is an option for them," he says. "They're excited to hear that they may not have to wear reading glasses."

That makes nearly every patient over 40 who is an emerging presbyope or more advanced in their presbyopia a candidate for multifocal contact lenses. "It doesn't really matter if they're emerging presbyopes or if presbyopia has advanced to middle or later stages. Most people want to hear what's new and what could help them."

Based on the feedback he's heard from patients, Dr. Meyers finds that PureVision and SofLens multifocal contact lenses from Bausch + Lomb are a success all

around. "I've heard so many rave reviews about these contact lenses. People who wear them spread the word, and that nets referrals," he says. Just as importantly, it means that the patients whom he has fit with PureVision or SofLens Multi-Focal contact lenses are likely to stay with his practice for a long time. "These contact lenses help me retain my patients. I have seen so many repeat patients who may need only a boost in the reading prescription. Since I'm the first one who told them about these contact lenses, they're going to keep coming back to me." ●

ACTION PLAN

Try It; You Might Like It

On numerous occasions, Dr. John Meyers has urged a patient to try PureVision® Multi-Focal or SofLens® Multi-Focal contact lenses. These patients might have told him that they were content with monovision or they didn't mind wearing their reading glasses with their spherical contact lenses. Or perhaps they stopped wearing contact lenses some years ago.

But he provides a friendly suggestion. "Just try these contact lenses for a week. If you don't like them, we'll go back to what you were wearing," he says. Most of the time, these patients return a week later, completely sold on their new multifocal contact lenses. "Thank you so much for telling me about these contact lenses," they tell him. They become enthusiastic advocates for the practice as a result of the experience. "When I get a response like that, it just reminds me why I want to try to recommend these multifocal contact lenses to everyone." ●



Now Is the Time to Review Your Retail Pricing

How do you price your contact lenses? Do you have a pricing strategy that encourages annual supply sales, which lead to patient retention? How frequently do you review your pricing strategy?

If you are like many other eye care professionals, the thought of coming up with a pricing strategy for your office that ensures profitability and competitiveness makes your head spin. You became an eye care professional to help your patients see, and all the other parts of your business can sometimes be a daunting task.

With ABB OPTICAL GROUP's quarterly *Soft Lens Retail Price Monitor* and Annual Supply tools, that task becomes much easier to implement in your practice. ●

ABB OPTICAL GROUP's *Soft Lens Retail Price Monitor*



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Trend-spotting: Angel Alvarez Was Guest on The Power Hour

In April, ABB OPTICAL GROUP CEO **Angel Alvarez** was a guest on The Power Hour with The Power Practice CEO **Gary Gerber, OD**, where he answered questions about the merger between ABB CONCISE and ODG. Alvarez said that because the



Dr. Gerber

merger increases the volume of business, the company, ABB OPTICAL GROUP, should be able to build greater efficiencies and drive down costs. "We plan on reinvesting in technology that will help level the playing field so that eye care practitioners (ECPs) can compete with whatever their competition is," he said. Specifically, he mentioned that reduced costs and front-end investments would allow ABB OPTICAL GROUP to provide better e-business platforms.

He added that both companies had focused on offering the best pricing to practitioners, and that focus wasn't going to change. "More than three-quarters of our practices are at or lower than the manufacturers' pricing, through the use of banks, inventories and locks." As part of the approval process in the merger, ABB CONCISE and ODG had to prove to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that they wouldn't raise their prices. "Our goal is to align all of the programs so that our ECPs succeed. If an ECP loses a patient, we lose that patient, too," he said.

Dr. Gerber asked what contact lens trends Alvarez anticipates for 2013. "In 2012, contact lenses grew 6.5 percent; for 2013, we see similar growth driven by migration to daily disposable, multifocal and toric contact lenses. Independent eye care practitioners have gained share over the last couple of years," in all categories, Alvarez said.

The duo took calls from listeners during the podcast. One of the recurring themes was the need for practitioners to recognize challenges and preempt them. For example, by the time a patient has an online

seller fax an authorization for a contact lens prescription release or the practitioner hears resistance from a patient about the need for an annual exam or even hears a patient ask for a PD, the opportunity to capture this patient for sales most likely has been missed.

"A majority of online ordering is a two-unit transaction. These are hybrid patients who see you for professional services and may be loyal to an online company for sales of one or two boxes of contact lenses," Alvarez said. He suggested that practitioners can use their integrated web sites, such as yourlens.com, which is powered by ABB CONCISE, to develop a tiered pricing strategy to direct patients there. Many practices offer in-office annual supply rebates along with manufacturers' rebates that make an annual supply of contact lenses the best value proposition. But if one of these hybrid patients is shopping for only one or two boxes of contact lenses, then online retailers are probably less expensive. Alvarez suggested that by providing some incentive for these patients to buy even their smaller purchases through your web site (thereby eliminating the need to involve your staff in the transaction), you may be able to change that patient's buying habits.

Another incentive might be to offer free direct-to-patient shipping, even with lower-volume purchases. "The number one promotion online is free shipping, across all online web sites," he said. Practitioners could try this approach for a half year or year and see if the shipping charges they accrue are worth the increased sales. But the first step is to make sure your patients know that you have



POWERHOUR
POWER YOUR DREAMS

a web site where they can go to compare. "Register them on the web site while they are still in the office. Have them experience the registering and the ordering processes so that they are already engaged."

Alvarez encouraged practitioners to develop a culture of pre-emptively explaining to patients what they need, why they need it and how the practice

can help them. Dr. Gerber added that anything a practice can do to make it convenient for a patient already standing in the office to finish all of his or her transactions there is a benefit to the practice. "It's like you're buying into a Blue Chip stock." There will be some up-front costs, but the long-term rewards will be terrific.

Dr. Gerber asked Alvarez for his best advice for doctors who want to maximize profits. "Best-in-class ECPs have a plan to measure gross margin and growth. We can help you measure that with our Business Review. Make sure to have a retail pricing strategy, with which we can also help with our *Soft Lens Retail Price*

"A majority of online ordering is a two-unit transaction. These are hybrid patients who see you for professional services and may be loyal to an online company for sales of one or two boxes of contact lenses."

—Angel Alvarez

Monitor. A lot of prices have changed since January, and if you haven't changed prices, this is the time to do so," Alvarez said.

In terms of contact lenses, Alvarez recommended that practitioners work to increase their direct-to-patient shipments to at least 50 percent of contact lens sales, inventory their top two spherical brands and be adamant about selling annual supplies, he added. Consider your contact lens mix, too, to make sure it has a healthy focus on specialty contact lenses for products such as daily disposable contact lenses where the compliance and patient retention is high.

An authorized distributor can help practices consolidate ordering to reduce costs, and a web site that provides consumers with a way to reach out to your practice 24/7 is important. ABB OPTICAL GROUP will be revising the web store offerings, taking the best of the ABB CONCISE and ODG offerings to develop an enhanced, customizable web store for its accounts. Stay tuned for more information on that and other ABB OPTICAL GROUP merger updates throughout the year. ●

May Is Healthy Vision Month



NATIONAL EYE INSTITUTE
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

May is Healthy Vision Month (HVM), a national eye health observance established by the National Eye Institute (NEI), in May 2003, to bring attention to the millions of people living in the U.S. with undetected vision problems, eye diseases and conditions. HVM is designed to elevate vision as a health priority for the nation by promoting the importance of early detection and treatment, as well as the use of proper eye safety practices, in preventing vision loss and blindness.

On its web site, nei.nih.gov/hvm, NEI provides links to educational materials that emphasize the importance of annual eye exams. ●

Make Contact Lens Wear Easy for Your Patients

New and young wearers especially appreciate the convenience of a daily disposable contact lens

Contact lens wear is a responsibility that shouldn't be handled lightly, yet **Sean P. Coughlin, OD**, never wants patients to feel intimidated by the routine. So about five years ago when he began regularly prescribing the 1-DAY



Dr. Coughlin

ACUVUE® MOIST® Brand Contact Lenses from VISTAKON® Division of Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc., he realized that this daily replacement schedule could play a big part in his Orlando practice.

And he was right. Fast forward to today, and the 1-DAY ACUVUE MOIST

Brand Contact Lenses have become his first choice for contact lens wearers. "If the parameters fit, I go to these daily disposables first,"

Dr. Coughlin says. "Our number of patients wearing them has been growing like wildfire." He first emphasized prescribing these contact lenses for new wearers, especially preteens and teens. Patients can put a fresh, new lens on their eyes each day and decrease their chance of developing a complication.

He begins his conversation with patients by explaining the health benefits. He'll ask current contact

lens wearers, "How does your contact lens feel when it's brand new, compared to when it's on its last legs?" When patients comment that the first day feels wonderful, Dr. Coughlin can transition into a conversation on the daily disposable option. "How would you like for your contact lenses to feel that way every day?" he asks them. The exclusive LACREON® Technology in 1-DAY ACUVUE MOIST Brand Contact Lenses keeps the contact lens feeling comfortable for one day of use.

Parents also like that the daily disposables are a healthy and convenient way to keep their children compliant with contact lens wear. "Parents want what

is best for their kids, and this is it," Dr. Coughlin says. If one contact lens is lost or torn, it's easy to replace. Plus, when you factor in rebate savings and subtract the cost of contact lens care solutions, you pay about the same price to wear a fresh new contact lens every day. Dr. Coughlin sends patients home to try the new contact

lenses and see how they fit into their lifestyle. "I tell patients if they miss cleaning their contact lenses, I'll switch them back," he says, laughing.



Brand Loyalty

Dr. Sean Coughlin has been working with VISTAKON® and ACUVUE® products since he graduated from optometry school 20 years ago. "Once someone starts wearing an ACUVUE lens, it's hard to take him or her out of it." His wife is a prime example. Dr. Coughlin often has his wife try new products, and a common response is that the comfort doesn't compare to ACUVUE® Brand Contact Lenses. Today, his wife enjoys the convenience of the 1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST® Brand Contact Lenses. ●

Dr. Coughlin's astigmatic patients eagerly welcomed the 1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST® Brand for ASTIGMATISM once it became available. "I joke around with these patients and tell them their daily disposables are finally here," Dr. Coughlin says. He's found the best success by simply letting the patients experience the contact lenses for themselves. "The key is getting the contact lenses on their eyes."

VISTAKON has supported Dr. Coughlin's practice in countless ways over the years. His representatives "do a very good job whenever I need anything, and the rebates are strong to help us compete with big-box stores and online retailers." ●

Allergy Symptoms Contribute to Discomfort

As the weather changes, remember that your patients may be experiencing ocular symptoms from their seasonal allergies. VISTAKON® Division of Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc., Senior Director, Professional Affairs **Richard Wallingford, Jr., OD, FAAO**, addressed this issue in a recent letter to his colleagues. In an online U.S. eye allergy survey conducted by Harris Interactive® on behalf of VISTAKON, conditions such as itchy, watery or red eyes were named top reasons patients were uncomfortable wearing their contact lenses.

The 1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST® Brand Contact Lenses and 1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST® for ASTIGMATISM Brand Contact Lenses are a great choice for allergy sufferers because they can wear a clean lens every day without worrying about buildup of ocular irritants. Dr. Wallingford reminds ODs that valuable rebates are available for these brands. For more information on allergies, download the complimentary educational brochure titled *Eye Health and Allergies*, available in the Patient Education section of acuvueprofessional.com. ●

ACTION PLAN

Write Two Prescriptions

If patients are still on the fence after a trial period with 1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST® Brand Contact Lenses, **Dr. Sean Coughlin** eases their concerns by writing them two prescriptions. "Use these daily replacement contact lenses when you go to the beach or if you lose a contact lens," Dr. Coughlin tells his patients. "They get used to the convenience of daily disposable contact lenses over time." Patients who travel frequently also appreciate that they can go through the security line at the airport without worrying about carrying a bottle of contact lens care solution.

Growing up frugally, Dr. Coughlin admits that it took him a little while to warm up to the idea of daily disposable contact lenses because he thought his patients might hesitate at the price. But the value of a daily disposable hit home when he took a trip down the contact lens care solution aisle for his wife. Learning how much his patients were spending for these products outside of his practice, Dr. Coughlin discovered that the price difference was fairly insignificant when he subtracted the cost of solutions and factored in a rebate. "The math worked out, and because this is a healthy, easy way to wear contact lenses, it made sense." ●

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT CORNER

North, South, East or West— Which Employee Is the Best?

By Mary E. Schmidt, ABOC, CPO

How many times have you heard yourself say, “Why can’t everyone be like _____?”

Not everyone on your team will be effortless to manage, but some are more worth the effort than others. It’s important to develop a management style based on the needs of each of your team members. Can you answer these questions for each person in your practice? What skills do they currently have, how do they like to be rewarded, what motivates them and where can you develop them?

Your team has the opportunity to excel if you have more than one method for communication, training and staff development. But first you must evaluate who is on your team and whether he or she can be developed to your level of performance expectation. Think of the points of a compass: north, south, east and west. Now let’s put attributes to those positions and develop a plan.

Northbound—The employee you love! He or she is motivated, dedicated, focused on the goals of the practice and a self-starter.

Westbound—The employee you appreciate but who leaves a little to be desired. He or she is motivated and dedicated but can lose sight of the goals and sometimes needs a nudge in the right direction.

Eastbound—This employee can’t seem to perform well consistently. This person is not motivated or focused but can get the job done. He or she seems more dedicated to personal goals than to practice success.

Southbound—This employee is not working out. He or she has no motivation or dedication and seems focused on stirring up trouble with patients and/or co-workers.

Now let’s consider actions you can take with each individual team member.

Northbounders: These employees are hard to find and, once we find them, we can neglect them because they require so little oversight. This is a mistake! Refocus on your Northbounders, and make them feel valued by the practice in these three ways.

Words of affirmation: tell them that you notice their outstanding performance and love having them on your team. Pay attention to their positive abilities and let them know. This should be done, at a minimum, once a week.

Gifts of appreciation, such as a card to Starbucks or some other small token, demonstrate your appreciation.

Invest in their growth and development, send them to training and education programs, and give them the opportunity to accept a more challenging role.

Patients love Northbounders!

Westbounders: These employees are a little easier to find and take a bit more effort for the manager, but they are well worth the investment in time. Spend some one-on-one time with your Westbounders and develop a plan with them. They need to know you’re



Mary E. Schmidt

paying attention and want them to succeed.

Provide clear direction.

Develop goals with accountability.

Reward their successes.

A Westbounder can head north if you manage his or her development well or head south if left unattended. Patients value Westbounders.

Eastbounders: There are more of these employees in the workforce than we’d like to believe. They take a lot of work and may not give you a return on your investment. If you currently have Eastbounders on your staff, give them the opportunity to excel with these guidelines.

Set very clear performance expectation levels.

Hold them accountable on a daily basis. If they step up to your expectations, *acknowledge them*; if not, *terminate them*.

Eastbounders can perform well but only if they choose to. Try to screen out these performers during your interview process and terminate them early if they don’t achieve. Patients will avoid an Eastbounder.

Southbounders: These employees will damage your practice. They are not going to change, and no matter how good their manager, they will do what they want to do. If you have them on your team and choose to give them an opportunity to achieve, begin the process this way.

Hold a serious discussion of performance expectation and stay on top of them all day, every day. Once they are clear that you will not accept their substandard performance level, *they often resign or will be terminated*. Too often, Southbounders are kept on to the detriment of the practice. Patients will leave the practice because of Southbounders.

We all have employees whom we love to work with and we have employees who try our last nerve. Why do you think that is? Is it us? Is it them? Yes it is! Who you have on your team and how you develop them will determine your success or failure. The goal is to learn from your mistakes and screen for the best employee for your practice and patient needs. ●

In the next issue of The Profit Advisor, we will discuss how to interview effectively.

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