



Grow Your Very Own
PRACTICE

Telemedicine Services Allows Doctor Greater Flexibility And Gives Patients More Access



Jacqueline Evans, OD, sees telemedicine as the complementary service that can increase access to eye care and help optometrists thrive. She is putting that idea to the test at Ellington Eye Care, the independent practice she opened in September 2021 inside a Walmart in Westminster, Colorado, about 10 miles north of Denver. When she was first approached about the opportunity to open this location, she was just completing her time with the Digitaloptometrics team as a remote tele-optometric provider. Through that experience, “I was able to re-evaluate what we do as practitioners and step outside of the preconceived notions,” she says.

She works in the office to see patients in person and also uses a variety of telemedicine tools to help her assess or monitor others. “My idea was to come up with a hybrid practice where I am in the office three days a week and offer remote services two days a week. Today, there is great instrumentation that allows us to do that,” she says. She has made Saturdays an in-person day, making it easy for patients who would like to be seen in person.

Her imaging system includes in a smart phone attachment so she can capture images. She

lane so she is present virtually on the days she is not there.

“NOT EVERYONE IS A CANDIDATE”

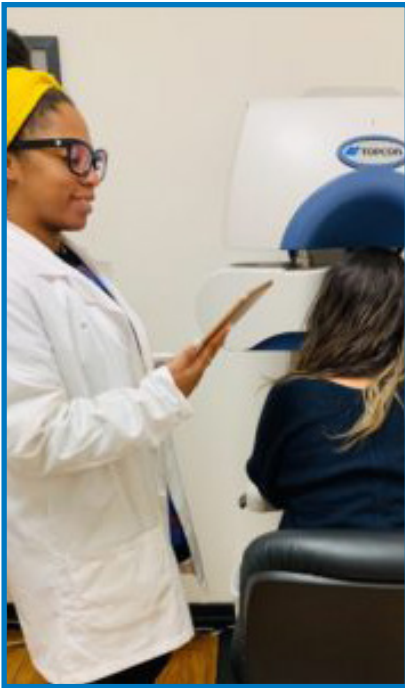
Dr. Evans notes that it is important to note that not every patient is a candidate for a telemedicine visit. “I had to train the staff to triage. If someone is experiencing any pain or red eye, that needs to be scheduled for a day when a doctor is there. Same with any child under 7. I’m there for all patients who need retinoscopy or a dilation,” she says.

Sometimes that means hav-

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uploads images into a cloud-based system so she can view them remotely, and she has a camera on a tripod in the exam

ing a patient return. For example, if the retinal images show concerns about glaucoma, she says, “We can do the rest of the



Dr. Evans can use her technology when she's with the patient or can view the data remotely.

exam and have that patient come back or refer them based on the strong referral network I have in place.”

While many patients have a sense of what an in-person eye exam consists of, they may be a little more apprehensive or curious about how a telemedicine visit compares. “We have a large-screen TV that plays videos explaining the newest advances in eye care and also what our equipment and testing procedures are. The signage we have says, ‘Virtual exams conducted at this location,’ and that makes people curious. My technician explains that the same tests are done in a virtual visit, if the patient is a good candidate.”

GETTING PAID

Dr. Evans uses a HIPAA-compliant telemedicine platform, with a waiting room function where the patient can view videos while they’re waiting. “It’s an accessible means of allowing patients to have a great and convenience experience,” she says. She also has incorporate, an tablet-based electronic health records system. “It is an EHR, scheduler, text messaging and emailing system with the tablet interface. I can talk with the patient remotely and show them the photos I am seeing,” she says.

“The reception from patients has been tremendous, and many of my colleagues are asking questions,” she says.

Her in-office days are typically 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., with a longer day on Mondays. But now if there are snow days or her toddler is sick, “I don’t have to miss a beat. I’m still able to view the results of the refractions and see the images and issue a prescription,” she says.

Optometry had been slower to the telemedicine adaptation than some other professions, she says. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed forward reimbursements for patients with government-funded health care, and many other insurances followed suit, she says. Today, her telemedicine services are covered by VSP, Spectera and Medicaid in addition to private pay

patients. In addition, incorporating telemedicine into her practice has allowed her to be much more efficient with her time.

Dr. Evans is looking for ways to expand her reach. She is licensed in 12 states, so the idea of investing in telemedicine equipment in other locations as permitted under each state law and bringing on an optometrist to work two or three days a week could be an effective way to expand her business footprint.

Finally, finding an

“I don’t have to miss a beat. I’m still able to view the results of the refractions and see the images and issue a prescription.”

alternative way to practice and balance work and home has added renewed enjoyment. “I didn’t think I could have this much fun,” she says. That shows in the way she has approached decorating the practice space. “Our walls are covered in photos; there’s a coffee bar and great music playing. People walk in and are surprised to find this kind of environment,” she says.

Community Activism Keeps OD Inspired



When people think of Peru, Madagascar and Fiji, they often think about the exotic landscape, delicious food and warm waters. However, these beautiful places lack something important: accessible eye care for those in more rural areas. **Kara Fedders, OD**, of Colorado Springs Eyecare, an independent practice next to a Walmart in Colorado Springs, Colorado, has seen this need in each of these places during various outreach initiatives, and she strives to do something about it.

She is highly active in the numerous charitable organizations and currently serves as the president of the Volunteer Optometric Service to Humanity (VOSH) Colorado, as well

as working with the Colorado Springs Lions Club. Through VOSH/International, she has had the opportunity to visit Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Madagascar and Fiji and has provided accessible eye care and eyeglasses to those who need it but have little or no access in their communities.

“I was amazed that the patients often walked miles and waited hours for eye care and eyeglasses,” she says of those she helped during her trips. She and other ODs provide eye exams, diagnoses and prescription lenses to anyone who needs them- and, often, it can change the patient’s life. “It is amazing to see the look on a patient’s face when they can see their family clearly for the first time,” she says.

RECONNECTING TO THEIR LIVELIHOOD

Dr. Fedders tells of some of the women in many of the villages she has provided care to. “Most of them sew clothes, and that is how they contribute to their society,” she says. “If they can’t see well enough to thread a needle, they may lose their sense of worth in

their community.”

She says she can often hear the joy in the patient’s voice when they receive what they need, even if they speak a different language. Their smiles and delight at seeing

“It is amazing to see the look on a patient’s face when they can see their family clearly for the first time”

the world around them clearly are certain indicators. “It’s very rewarding,” she says.

Dr. Fedders’ practice accepts eyeglass and sunglass donations that the volunteer teams can distribute during the trips. Some of the donations come via a local casino’s lost and found box, which gets cleaned out every other month. “It doesn’t matter where they come from,” she says of the eyewear, which is cleaned and sorted for distribution. “These eyeglasses can light up someone



Dr. Fedders on a mission trip.

PHOTO CREDIT: WOMEN IN OPTOMETRY

else's world." Anyone can drop donations inside her practice at their convenience.

BALANCING PRACTICE AND PHILANTHROPY

As a busy practice owner, Dr. Fedders also prioritizes the time to volunteer as much as she can. She says having an independent practice next to a Walmart Vision Center is a great option for her. Dr. Fedders is able to focus on patient care rather than some of the administrative duties of she would have if she also had to focus on running a full-service optical. "Being next to a Walmart Vision Center is such a great option for me," she says. "It is really nice simply focusing on providing great care to my

patients."

Dr. Fedders started her independent practice next to this

"We have to remember how fortunate we are to live in a place where healthcare is accessible."

Walmart Vision Center 22 years ago and has since impacted the lives of thousands both inside and outside the practice. Dr. Fedders enjoys fitting contact lenses, especially specialty contacts, and

has been building a dry eye clinic, an important element in the dry mountain climate and enjoys adding innovative products and diagnostics. Plus, she co-manages surgical patients as well as letting the community know she is available for emergencies.

She is well known in the community for her efforts to reach out to people in need. A section of her independent practice website is dedicated to her outreach and charity initiatives. "Even looking back at the photos of those we helped keeps me motivated," she says. "We have to remember how fortunate we are to live in a place where healthcare is accessible."

OD Finds Freedom To Practice As She Wants In Independent Practice Next To A Walmart Vision Center



Kelsey Hanke, OD, remembers her childhood-self standing “with her nose against the glass” as her father received LASIK. That was an indication of her early interest in ocular anatomy and function. Now she feeds her passion for the care of such a “tiny organ” every day at her practice, Hanke Optometry, next to a Walmart Vision Center in Middletown, Ohio.

After graduating from The Ohio State University College of Optometry, Dr. Hanke found herself considering her career path. She originally had “misconceptions” about the world of corporate-affiliated optometry and thought the options were limited to employed OD positions. When she realized that Walmart offered the opportunity for leases for

independent practices, that was a game-changer. “I tell people that I work with Walmart, not for them.” She’s been an independent optometrist in her current lease for just over two years and just signed a new one for another three.

MORE SUPPORT

Even though she runs her independent practice with the ability to do as she pleases, Dr. Hanke chooses to receive support and extra pairs of hands from Walmart. Dr. Hanke takes advantage of the ability to contract scheduled hours with opticians, technicians and billing associates employed by Walmart Vision Center, so she doesn’t have to worry about hiring her own staff. Although she enjoys the efficiency of this model, Dr. Hanke appreciates the flexibility to bring in a technician of her choosing as well.

MORE OPPORTUNITY

Less paperwork on her plate means more time to focus on enhancing her practice, too. Dr. Hanke provides visual field and pretesting for patients with updated equipment, and she recently

acquired a fundus camera/OCT scanner. Those efficiencies allow her to focus on optimizing the patient experience with the staff and equipment she has or wants to add in the future. “The technology in my office allows me to provide an excellent eye evaluation and precise treatment for my patients,” she says.

Best of all, she says, she is able to achieve the work-life balance she wants. She started her schedule at five days per week, but recently went to four days and slightly longer shifts, which works better for Dr. Hanke and her family. She and her husband are avid travelers and love to spend time with their “spoiled” cats, so that extra day off means Dr. Hanke can focus on patients in the office when she’s at work and family time when she’s home.

“I love that I am able to practice with freedom but can go home afterwards without a worry because I can focus solely on clinical care,” she says. It’s a great balance, she says. “I get to run an independent practice without the responsibilities most private owners experience, such as taking care of an office building space,” she says. “I can do what I love best: focus on patient care.”

Giving Back To Her Hometown



After graduating from Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry in 2015, **Shannon Joseph, OD**, knew that she wanted to give back to the community that had helped raise her. She found a good fit at an independent practice next to the Walmart Vision Center in Hallandale Beach, Florida.

“Walmart has publicly stated the company’s commitment to making health care accessible, convenient and affordable in the communities it serves and this fits with my mission too, says Dr. Joseph. “I want to provide access to quality eye care to those who need it. Working next to a Walmart Vision Center is a great combination of options: an independent practice next to an accessible location where my patients can easily find me.”

At the store level, she’s been impressed by the dedication of the technicians who work in her office as well as the Vision Center staff, who operate completely independent of

her practice, but who are committed to helping patients. At larger events, whenever she’s met other independent optometrists who have independent practices next to a **Walmart Vision Center**, she comes away feeling they are just as passionate about providing excellent patient care to their patients and communities as she is.

She has noticed that the store management is also focused on amplifying the messages of good health and preventive care. “Walmart doesn’t just say it’s a goal to help people,” Dr. Joseph says. The company often holds events like Walmart Wellness Days and promotions for associates and patients alike, she says, making access to care easier for all involved.

REACHING OUT

Dr. Joseph is involved on her own time, too—she gets involved in community outreach programs, and she mentors and speaks to graduating students at her alma mater to discuss balancing being an OD and an independent business owner.

She routinely volunteers her services at health fairs, which she says is a great opportunity for the community to receive necessary vaccines and check-ups which can be beneficial to their overall health.

She says she is grateful to be part of the initiatives. “It’s hard to find a great team,” she says, “but when you

do, it makes everything easier.”

She loves what she does, too, she says. Her independent practice allows her to create her own network connections and a flexible schedule, “My contract with Walmart allows me the opportunity to practice eye care as I see fit,” she says.

Helping her patients see better keeps Dr. Joseph motivated, but it’s seeing a difference in her community



Dr. Joseph treating a pediatric patient

that really seals the deal. “I love what I do,” she says. “I love to give back. Educate, guide and teach when you can. You can make a difference. The world is a better place when you do.”

[Find a Walmart Vision Center near you.](#)

Search job postings and career opportunities at **[Walmart Vision Center.](#)**

The Practice Setting that Made It Easier for Me to Become a Medical Eyecare Innovator

By Renee Reinholdt, OD



PHOTO CREDIT: SHARAMAND

When I started my career, I knew I wanted to focus on medical eyecare. Once I knew that, I then needed to decide on a practice setting that would complement my primary interest as an optometrist.

Here is how I ended up owning two independent optometry practices adjacent to [Walmart](#) stores—and enhancing my focus on medical eyecare.

I started out at a private practice in a small town in Iowa

while working part-time at nearby Walmart Vision Centers. I then moved to Indianapolis and had my first corporate lease. In 2013, I moved to St. George, Utah, for warmer weather and started my affiliation with Walmart as an

independent practice owner.

I now have two independent practices adjacent to Walmart, one in Richfield, Utah, and another in Mesquite, Nev. I opened the Utah office in 2013 and the Nevada office in 2017. Both of these Walmart stores serve rural areas. My patient demographics draw from a mostly older, retired population, especially in the Mesquite office.

The older patient base in a part of the country where there is not an over-saturation of health-care providers is a perfect fit for my medical eyecare focus.

Medical Eyecare Made Easier

My experience working in offices located adjacent to Walmart stores has been great. I am an independent optometrist, and am able to practice a medical model of optometry.

Walmart provided an exam lane and pretesting equipment. I then acquired more equipment on my own for both locations to enhance my medical practice. For example, I now have OCTs, ERGs and a second exam lane in both offices.

Primed for Growth

Both offices have grown substantially, which allowed me to bring in other optometrists as I increased the number of doctor days. My passion since moving to the arid western U.S. is dry eye treatment. Age, as well as many health conditions, contribute to

dry eye disease. Many patients have seen several doctors trying to find relief.

I am so excited to be the only practice in Mesquite, Nev., that offers low level light therapy and intense pulse light therapy (IPL). These treatments reduce inflammation, alleviate abnormal blood vessels and improve meibomian



Dr. Reinholdt with the low-level laser therapy instrument that is part of the suite of advanced instrumentation she uses as part of her practice's medical eyecare services.

gland function. IPL also has a cosmetic effect. It provides reduced redness and skin rejuvenation.

When Overhead Costs Are Low, You Can Invest More to Develop New Services

Working with Walmart allows me to keep my overhead costs low and provides an instant patient base, including walk-ins,

for my practice. I have a great Health and Wellness Director, Sean Rammell, who supports the medical model, so I can provide patients the highest quality of medical care.

Setting the Stage for Greater Professional Growth & Profitability

Practicing the medical model requires the doctor to learn additional coding and billing.

I like to take classes and continue to learn, so I took medical billing classes through AAPC in Salt Lake City. I am a certified professional coder (CPC), a certified instructor (CPC-I) and a certified ophthalmic coder (COPC). This has helped me file my own medical claims and mentor associate ODs. Also, the required CE for these certifications keeps me updated on ICD-10 and CPT changes.

Ideal Setting for Medical Eyecare

Optometry has evolved over my career. I hope more doctors will consider practicing the medical model. I want optometrists to know that this can be done successfully in a corporate setting.

Renee Reinholdt, OD, is the owner of two independent practices, located adjacent to Walmart stores in Richfield, Utah, and Mesquite, Nev.

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The Practice Setting Empowering My Teleoptometry-Based Practice

By Leonard Goldstein, OD



The pandemic changed consumer expectations. Many have become more accustomed to virtual interactions. Besides the change in expectations, some less-populated areas have reduced access to eyecare. I had the opportunity to launch a teleoptometry practice over the last two years.

My practice expands access to care while allowing me to build a practice aligned with an exciting new way of providing quality care. My three independent practices (one fully in operation and the other two on the way) are located adjacent to Walmart Vision Centers. This has given me the support I need to successfully launch a forward-thinking method of practice.

A New Perspective on Practice Growth

I've had an opportunity over the years to practice in a variety of ways. I've had a solo private practice for 32 years, was a military OD, developed one of the first retail optical websites, created a large-scale skilled nursing home practice in 1993, and for the past 14 years, have practiced as an independent optometrist, most recently with offices adjacent to Walmart

need for remote care became obvious, but as I delved further, I realized the need was greater than that. I realized there were many other reasons this modality made sense, including staffing utilization. Supply and demand!

Optimizing the Advantages of Teleoptometry With Right Support

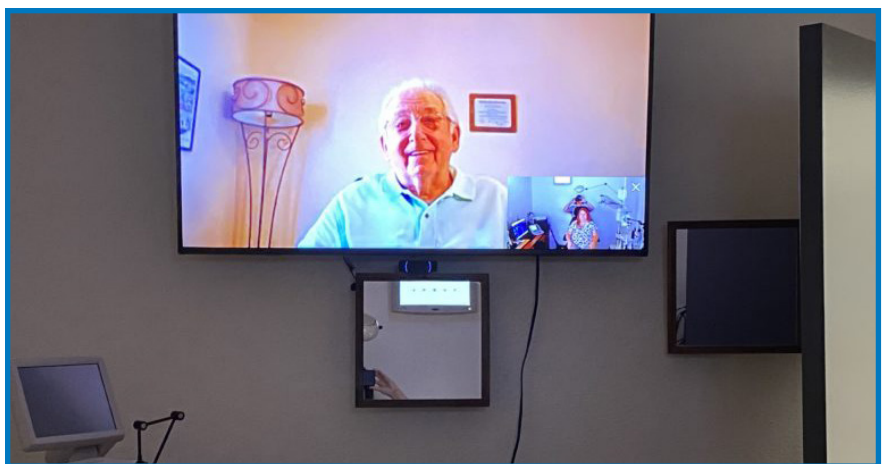
Teleoptometry does more than just fulfill new consumer expectations; it provides significant additional advantages. Among

“During the pandemic, the need for remote care became obvious, but as I delved further, I realized the need was greater than that. I realized there were many other reasons this modality made sense, including staffing utilization. Supply and demand!”

Vision Centers.

I've always tried to be ahead of the curve in the industry, and the emerging modality of remote eye exams is of great interest to me. During the pandemic, the

those advantages, teleoptometry allows for multiple locations in smaller markets, adding up to as full a patient load as you desire. When you combine that with the key advantage of having an independent practice adjacent to a



Dr. Goldstein delivering a teleoptometry-based appointment. He says that the ability to deliver high-quality, efficient remote care will only grow in importance.

Walmart Vision Center you have a winning formula.

Walmart often makes adding advanced instrumentation easier. I am able to rent the technology I need from Walmart at fair market value, rather than buy it myself.

Some offices adjacent to Walmart even receive clerical and technician support at reasonable fees.

Having an independent practice adjacent to a Walmart Vision Center, where many visit to shop for groceries and other items, allows for a large population that may warrant my vision care services. They see our independent optometry practice and then look us up online. When they schedule an appointment, they learn that their visit will be handled in a way that may be new to them.

Most Patients Are Open & Ready for Remote Care

We don't want any surprises. I

advise patients what to expect. Our receptionist lets patients booking appointments know that they will get a comprehensive eye exam, but that the doctor will not be in the exam room with them. Of the 300 appointments we have completed via the use of teleoptometry, only one person was not open to the new format.

When patients arrive, they are given a tablet to complete patient demographics and history. My technician then pre-tests and takes photos with our OCT and retinal camera.

The patient is taken to the exam room, which has a 50-inch screen that allows the patient and I to interact remotely. I review the findings revealed by the OCT and retinal camera images and do the refraction myself. There is a camera that allows me to look closely at the patient's eyes, similar to the image produced by a slit lamp.

I educate the patient about

any diagnoses I have made, with instructions for any follow-up care that is necessary. A button is pressed to print out the patient's prescription for glasses or contact lenses. The patient is given their Rx, which can be filled at the optical shop of their choosing, including a Vision Center if they elect.

The Right Time & Practice Setting for Teleoptometry

Teleoptometry has blossomed like a rose, but one with potential thorns. We're still defining best practices for teleoptometry in eyecare to consistently offer the highest quality patient care and patient experience. Walmart is the perfect model for teleoptometry. Many stores are located in rural settings, and the opportunity often presents to acquire the necessary technology.

Teleoptometry is the wave of the future, and I'm glad to be a part of it with my private practices adjacent to Walmart Vision Centers. I'm proud to have expanded access to care while staying ahead of the curve in a modern eyecare practice.

Leonard Goldstein, OD, has created a consulting practice to help others move ahead in this exciting field.

[Teleeyecareconsultants.com](https://www.teleeyecareconsultants.com) is a fee-based service for that purpose.

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