

Midwest Monthly

Are You Capturing Your Patients?

Many optometrists see their position to be one as the patient caretaker; their role is to maintain the eye health care of their patients. Some even feel it is inappropriate or unprofessional to make lens or treatment recommendations. Often, the patient is directed to the dispensary and told an optician will be with them shortly. This is the moment when a patient may simply walk out the door and the eyewear sale is lost forever. In fact, of the 66 percent of patients who have eye exams at a private practice, only 41 percent purchase their eyewear at that practice according to VisionWatch, a Jobson and Vision Council program.

Your capture rate of patients is the number of exams you perform in your office that result in an eyewear purchase. To achieve this number, simply divide the number of eyewear purchases in a time period by the number of exams performed. A good capture rate is 70 to 80 percent. A 100 percent capture rate will never be achieved because of the patients that do not require an Rx. Many offices do not track capture rate at all. By simply tracking your capture rate you will increase the focus on the process and take measures to improve it.

Patients achieve a sense of security from having an on-going relationship with their doctor who is familiar with their history and personal needs. In contrast to chain providers, independent practitioners provide the individualized attention that fosters loyalty. This extends to their eyewear selection. It is not inconsistent with the doctor's professional image to make lens recommendations. In fact, isn't it important to make sure your patient's eye health continues to be protected in the eyewear they choose?

The best way to find out what your patient's visual needs are to ask questions. What is their occupation? Do they play sports? How much time do they spend at a computer? Only by collecting this information will you be able to recommend their custom visual solution. Having the patient complete a lifestyle questionnaire is the easiest way to gather this information. If you do not already utilize these questionnaires in your office, they are available from Midwest Labs.

Doctors' recommendations carry a lot of weight with patients and will help the dispensing optician provide the best eyewear solution for the patient. In addition to prescription information, the Rx pad should include lens

treatment options such as Transitions, anti-reflection and polarized. This way the patient receives their personalized lens prescription. Midwest Labs can also assist in providing these pads.

The hand off from the doctor to the optician is critically important when providing excellent patient service. Do not overlook this important opportunity in the selection of the patients eyewear choice.

The first step is to make sure everyone is on the same page when it comes to the hand off. It may even be helpful to have some staff training sessions. Role-playing will ensure everyone knows their part when it comes to guiding a patient from the exam to eyewear selection. The following are a few pointers to keep in mind:

- Never tell the patient to "take a look" at the frames until someone can help them. Frame selection is the opticians expertise and the patient should not be expected to do so on their own. In addition, their prescription may limit what frame styles can be used.
- Always introduce the patient to the optician that will be assisting them. Including a brief comment about the optician's excellent qualifications puts the patient at ease that they are in "good hands".
- A brief conversation including the patient's occupation and hobbies combined with the lens recommendations that have been discussed reinforces to the patient their eyewear needs.

In far too many cases, there is no dialogue about products during office visits. When patients do not convey any issues with their previous eyewear, many ECP's will simply assume the patient wants to stay with their same lens products and features. In reality, most patients do not take the time to investigate new technology as their expectation is that you, the professional, will make them aware of products that could benefit them. Dissatisfaction may occur later if the patient learns of new technology that was not offered during their visit.

No one likes to lose a sale, especially during these uncertain economic times. Take a little time to review the processes in your office and make sure that you aren't losing your patients' eyewear purchases to the chain down the street!



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