

OPTICAL PRISM

JULY/AUGUST 2024 • VOL. 42 • NO. 7

Creative Marketing

Strategies to help you build your business

PICTURE PERFECT

Patient portrait tips

MEET THE PARENTS

Helping parents through their child's treatment

EYE SPY

Solving ECP challenges in children's eye care

Game Changers

Lenses for kids in the digital age

GET OUT!

Make the most of summer for kids' eye health

Kidding AROUND

Eyewear to send kids back to class with style and confidence



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**Myopia care
for kids**

HOYA
FOR THE VISIONARIES



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Follow us on social media and subscribe to our mailing list for the latest eyewear and eye care news.

on the cover



COVER IMAGE: Superflex Kids by WestGroupe

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CHILDREN GROW OUT OF A LOT OF THINGS,
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Back-to-school means new clothes, new school supplies and, in some cases, new glasses. For ECPs, the latter involves more than just performing pediatric eye exams — it also means talking to children and their parents or caregivers about the child's eye health.

Communication is the key. This can and should include:

- Communicating with the child in an engaging, age-appropriate way to capture their attention, ensure their participation and explain any diagnosis or treatment.
- Communicating with parents or guardians to educate them about possible eye issues children can experience, the need for regular eye exams for children, and any diagnosis or treatment.
- Asking kids and parents appropriate questions to determine any issues the child may be having with everyday tasks, school or function that could indicate a vision problem.
- Getting a sense of how much time the child spends outside and how much they are on devices, because outdoor time and screen time can have an impact on the development of issues such as myopia.
- And, of course, being patient, listening carefully, and answering any questions calmly and thoroughly.

In this issue, we cover off these elements of communication and more, to help ECPs better care for their young patients and their parents. In our feature article, assistant editor David Goldberg gets to the heart of why screen time is such a key issue in children's eye care, why it's so important for kids to have regular eye exams, how young patients are different than their adult counterparts, and how to earn their cooperation and respect.

“When faced with children who have a serious eye condition, the eye care professional actually has two patients: the child and their parent(s).”

In our Biz Med column, writer Evra Taylor examines children's ocular diseases from the point of view of parents and caregivers — both of whom are often scared, anxious and confused. As Evra notes, “When faced with children who have a serious eye condition, the eye care professional actually has two patients: the child and their parent(s).” Patience and empathy are crucial in helping them through a difficult diagnosis and treatment.

Every child deserves to be happy and carefree, but unfortunately, eye health issues can pose major challenges for children and families. ECPs are perfectly positioned to be a preventative force and a caring, supportive presence, helping little ones and their families avoid or deal with these challenges. **OP**

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Fresh LOOKS

Keep your eyewear options fresh with the latest
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ULTRA LIMITED

This Italian brand's latest campaign blends handcrafted frames with elegant silk scarves to showcase endless styling possibilities. Models include Spargi, Lido, Pellestrina, Tropea and Manfredonia, each drawing inspiration from the luxurious Italian-made scarves. Vibrant colours and patterns in the eyewear mirror those of the scarves, creating a striking visual narrative.

For more information, contact your Ultra Limited representative or visit: ultralimited.it



F5052



F5050

TAKUMI

These ladies' full-rim rectangular frames are crafted from premium metal for a sleek look and durability, with a spring hinge for enhanced comfort and fit. Colour combinations include Pink & Shiny Gold, Black & Pink Gold, and Dark Green & Shiny Steel, with matching polarized clip-ons for outdoor wear (sold separately).

For more information, contact your Aspex Eyewear sales representative or visit: aspexeyewear.com

ECO EYEWEAR

This sustainability-pioneering brand has introduced a new product category called Retrospect, which combines the lightness of biobased injection with the classic look of an acetate frame. The collection features a lightweight injection material derived from castor seed oil, designed for efficiency and environmental sustainability.

For more information, contact your Eco representative or visit: eco-eyewear.com



Reed



Lily



Forrest

FITSON

The new Fitson collection includes the chic feminine styles F5050 and F5052. The gold and black colours of these metal frames emphasize the cat-eye shapes for a unique look.

For more information, contact your Canadian Optical Supply representative or visit: canadianoptical.com



TK1288

FRESH LOOKS

Indii



INDII KIDS

Just in time for back to school, Alternative & Plan B Eyewear have released a new pediatric collection, Indii Kids.

These durable, flexible plastic and titanium-alloy memory metal frames feature a two-strap system — a headband strap for high-energy activity and a temple tip strap for extra hold. The new hinge design holds tension and snaps tightly into the frames for a secure, comfortable fit.

For more information, contact your Alternative/Plan B representative or visit: alternativeeyes.com

CENTENNIAL

Centennial Optical offers a range of frames exclusively designed for children and teens, including Niki, Nicole Miller, Beaver Canoe, Champion Tweens, Nash Kids and Kids Mode. Frames come in a myriad of fun patterns, colours and shapes, and a variety of eye sizes to ensure proper fit. In other news, Centennial's Myopia Control lenses are now offered in Lab Pak as a complete eyewear package.

For more information, contact your Centennial representative or visit: centennialoptical.com

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FRESH LOOKS

SFK-305



SFK-298



SFK-302



SUPERFLEX

Funky new frames from Superflex Kids include the rectangular SFK-305 for boys, made from triple-layered custom acetate in a line design with a cool pop-of-colour effect. Available in three combinations: Matte Marine Apple, Black Lime Green, and Pine Orange Lemon.

SFK-298 is a playful stainless-steel girl's style with a modified round shape, a two-tone front and HD flower pattern on the temple. Available in Purple Sky, Aqua Raspberry, and Rose Lemon.

The modified square SFK-302 offers boys a vibrant burst of colour and pattern. A step-down feature along the front reveals a contrasting colour on the interior, while a patterned acetate temple provides an extra dose of fun. Offered in three colourways: Black Green, Navy Aqua, and Charcoal Orange.

For more information, contact your WestGroupe representative or visit: westgroupe.com

KALEOS

New from Kaleos Kids, this handmade Andersen frame has a hexagonal shape and built-in acetate nose pads. Available in Brown, Green and Pink, the ultra-trendy green colourway combines opaque and transparent acetate, finished with translucent ivory temple tips.

For more information, contact your Lanctôt sales representative or visit: rlanctot.com/en-ca



Kaleos Andersen



Snow Day



S'Mores

OGI KIDS

Translating the individuality, fun and wearability of OGI frames into pint-sized packaging for smaller faces, the latest frames from OGI Kids bring together studious silhouettes and vibrant colours. Snow Day keeps it classic with a soft oval shape, while S'Mores takes the two-tone colour palettes of the adult Roundabout style to a funkier place with its geometric shape.

For more information, contact your OGI representative or visit: ogieyewear.com

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FRESH LOOKS



Pipsqueak/
Peek-a-Boo

DILLI DALLI

This ClearVision Optical brand continues to grow its selection of pediatric eyewear with the introduction of two new models for infants. The new infant frames feature safe, flexible and durable materials, ensuring a secure and gentle fit for little faces. One frame is made from SoftTouch for maximum comfort, and the other is constructed with tough, colourful TR-90. Both models feature IntelliFlex hinges for durability and flexibility without any loose parts.

For more information, contact your ClearVision representative or visit: cvoptical.com

VONTÉLLE

The brand has partnered with eight-year-old author Naevia Thompson and her mother, Parris Elliott, on a kids' eyewear collection inspired by their book series, *Naevia's Magic Glasses*. The magical frames include Rainbow & Glitter and Science Experiment.

For more information, contact your Vontélle representative or visit: vontelle.com



Rainbow & Glitter



Science Experiment



Go Fish



Snappy



MODZ KIDZ

Modern Optical International has expanded its Modz Kids Collection with seven new on-trend styles in an array of vibrant and neutral colours. Durable materials include handmade acetate, stainless steel and TR90, with flexible 180-degree spring hinges. Go Fish is a two-toned rectangular frame with a detailed stainless steel temple core, while the rounded Snappy model features coloured accents on the fronts and temples.

For more information, contact your Modern Optical representative or visit: modernoptical.com

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HOYA
FOR THE VISIONARIES

FEATURE



EYE SPY

Solving ECP challenges in children's eye care

BY DAVID GOLDBERG

One in four school-aged children has an undetected vision problem that is affecting their learning, according to a study by the government of Ontario. Yet only 11.5% of children under the age of four and 22.6% of children under age six have ever been to an optometrist for an eye exam.

Parents and ECPs have to work together to do better, and that starts with educating the parents or caregivers on the nuances of childhood vision issues, says Dr. Martin Spiro, president of the Canadian Association of Optometrists.

“Symptoms of common pediatric eye conditions often manifest differently than in adults,” says Spiro. “A child with refractive errors might not complain about blurry vision, but may instead exhibit signs like squinting, sitting too close to the TV or experiencing academic difficulties.”

Spiro also recommends utilizing visual acuity assessments featuring age-appropriate symbols or images, rather than letters, to more effectively capture the attention and participation of young children during eye examinations.

With children, we have to rely more heavily on our clinical skills and perform investigative work to make the connection between signs and symptoms.

Communication is one of the foremost difficulties that ECPs face when working with young patients, says Dr. Danielle Gordon, an optometrist specializing in pediatric care at Sphere Optometry in Calgary.

“Children are typically not yet able to vocalize and describe what they are seeing (or not seeing) or feeling, and are also unable to indicate whether the prescribed treatment plan is working,” says Gordon. “With children, we have to rely more heavily on our clinical skills and perform more investigative work to make the connection between signs and symptoms.”

A big part of an ECP’s investigative work should focus on screen time, adds Shalu Pal, owner of Dr. Shalu Pal & Associates in Toronto.

“Oftentimes, before I bring it up, out of concern a parent will ask for my advice on screen time and specifically the hours their child spends on devices,” says Pal. “Regardless of whether they have brought it up or not, one of my standard questions is to ask about every patient’s length of device use per day.”

Pal educates both children and parents on the potential negative impacts of excessive screen time, including computer vision syndrome and dry eyes.

“My goal is to educate both kids and parents on how to improve comfort at screens, create good habits including taking breaks, and provide alternatives to using close devices,”

she explains. “I also explain the benefits of outdoor time, especially for those children who are not myopic yet, as increased time outdoors can slow the onset of myopia.”

Getting the Right Measurements

Sitting in the big chair in the exam room can make kids anxious or even uncooperative during eye exams. “Kids can be busy and move around a lot, and that can make certain aspects of the eye exam challenging,” says Gordon.

CHILDREN'S VISION AND SCREEN TIME



0–2 yrs

INFANTS AND TODDLERS

None, with the possible exception of live video-chatting (e.g., Skype, FaceTime) with parental support, due to its potential for social development.



2–5 yrs

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

No more than one hour per day of age-appropriate, educational and supervised viewing.



5–18 yrs

SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Ideally, no more than two hours per day of recreational screen time. Individual screen time plans should be based on development and needs.



Encourage outdoor activity over screen time

Increased prevalence or progression of myopia (nearsightedness) has been linked with children spending fewer hours outdoors.

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But what if it feels impossible to get a thorough assessment? Spiro advocates for the use of a few specialized treatment options tailored for pediatric use.

“Retinoscopy allows ECPs to determine a child’s prescription without requiring subjective responses,” he says. “And autorefractors designed for pediatric use can quickly and accurately measure refractive errors.”

Spiro also suggests the application of cycloplegic drops that temporarily paralyze the ciliary muscle to enhance the precision of refractive error measurements, as well as incorporating non-invasive imaging technologies.

Pal emphasizes the importance of leveraging technology to track family members’ visits and get more kids in for their annual eye exam. “When a patient comes in and has additional family members in our office, we check to see if their visits are up to date as well,” she says. “If they are not, we have a conversation with the patient in the office to encourage them to book their remaining family members in for their annual visit.”

Pal also uses recall systems from patients’ electronic medical records (EMRs) to reach out to parents of young patients who may have missed appointments.

“If patients are missed in the office conversation method, then we use our recall system from our EMR to call or email parents of little ones,” ensuring that no child falls through the cracks in receiving essential eye care.

When it comes to diagnostic tools, Dr. Gordon has preferred methodologies for assessing children’s eye health. “Personally, with babies and toddlers, I like to use my binocular indirect ophthalmoscope to quickly assess their eye health,” she says. “Speed and efficiency can be key, as they may not like bright lights or having a lens in front of their face.”

She also uses a regular slit lamp to examine the anterior segment and posterior pole of young patients. “When our pediatric patients are able to, we take an OCT of their optic nerve to capture the posterior pole and to gather baseline data for the future.”

Earning the Respect of Young Patients

Establishing trust and making the child feel comfortable can significantly impact the accuracy of the examination, notes Spiro. “Using child-friendly language, explaining procedures in a simple and reassuring way and incorporating playful elements can ease anxiety.”

Clear and transparent communication about a child’s condition, treatment options and prognosis is essential in fostering understanding and compliance among parents.

“Sitting on the floor examining a child while playing with them is where it all starts,” says Pal. “Building a rapport with both child and parent helps when diagnoses have to be discussed. Time, patience and empathy are important when discussing a child’s diagnosis.”

Pal values the connection she has forged with her young patients. “Having been in practice for 15 years now, I have had the pleasure of watching my young little patients grow into mature young adults,” she says. “I’m grateful that they ask for guidance and allow me to be a part of their journey.” **OP**

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* Essilor #1 in spectacle lenses worldwide - Euromonitor 2021 edition; Essilor International Company, worldwide retail value sales at RSP. ** Compared to single vision lenses, when worn by children at least 12 hours per day every day. Bao, J., Huang, Y., Li, X., Yang, A., Zhou, F., Wu, J., Wang, C., Li, Y., Lim, E.W., Spiegel, D.P., Chen, H., 2022. Spectacle Lenses With Aspherical Lenses for Myopia Control vs Single-vision Spectacle Lenses: A Randomized Clinical Trial, in China. JAMA Ophthalmol. 140(5), 472-478. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamaophthalmol.2022.0401>



style TIP

Younger trendsetters can now rock their style with a wide array of eyewear choices. ECPs can help ignite their creativity with eye-catching patterns and vibrant colours that transform every day into a fashion adventure filled with pure joy.

- WENDY BUCHANAN
Eyewear Image Expert



1.



2.

KIDDING AROUND

Eyewear can help kids express their sense of style, develop their confidence ... and most of all, have fun

BY SUZANNE LACORTE



3.



4.



5.



6.

1. SFK301 by WestGroupe , 2. TK1234 by Aspex Eyewear 3. Drew by MESquad 4. Modz Kids Parfait by Modern Optical 5. KT Biscuit by J.F. REY 6. Good Catch by OGI Eyewear

Game Changers

Prescribing and dispensing lenses for kids in the digital age

BY DAVID GOLDBERG

Every eye care professional aims to ensure that their young patients have the vision they need to excel in the classroom. And amid growing cases of myopia in children worldwide, ECP intervention has never been so critical. The World Health Organization estimates there will be 3.4 billion people living with myopia by 2030 — that's four out of every 10 people on the planet.

Myopia-control spectacle lenses for children are already widely available from the industry's most reputable lens makers. These products — including Stelvest by Essilor, MiYOSMART by HOYA, Myopia Management Lenses by ZEISS and MyCon by Rodenstock — employ various technologies to slow down the elongation of the eyeball.

Violet Shahbod, optician and sales representative with Centennial Optical, says today's lenses make a real difference in kids' lives. "Myopia is a good example of how research and breakthrough technologies are changing how eye care practitioners prescribe eyewear for this condition," says Shahbod.

Focusing on MyCon, she explains that conventional single-vision lenses can correct myopia but can't prevent it, and may even exacerbate the issue.

"When myopia is corrected with single vision lenses, light is projected behind the retina, causing some children's eyes to grow excessively long and exacerbating short-sightedness," she says. "With MyCon, light is diffused so that it strikes the periphery in front of the retina rather than behind it. This slows eye-length growth."

The areas that control myopia progression in a MyCon lens are located laterally. "This ensures that the visual acuity above and below is affected as little as possible," notes Shahbod.





Ultimately, minimizing screen time is the best weapon against myopia. According to the Canadian Association of Optometrists, research shows lower myopia levels in children who spent more time outdoors. Of course, that's all easier said than done in the digital age. But for the sake of eye strain and headaches, Shahbod suggests confidently offering blue light-blocking lenses to all young patients.

"Even if your child does not need prescription eyewear, you can still buy glasses that offer blue light protection."

Shahbod predicts that myopia control lenses will continue to be a primary focus for lens makers, adding that ECPs need to stay up on the latest lens trends to provide the clearest vision for patients.

Additionally, ECPs can expect to see more companies employ AI for hyper-accurate prescriptions.

KIDS & CONTACT LENSES

The thought of needing glasses can be anxiety-inducing for some kids, and contact lenses could be the solution, says optometrist Dr. Vishakha Thakrar of Vaughan Vision Centre in Ontario. They might even be more advantageous than glasses.

"I like to discuss myopia control contact lenses even if children are in myopia control glasses, just so the patient and parents are aware of what is available to them," says Thakrar. "Many kids play recreational or competitive sports, and glasses wear is not always conducive to sports. These contact lenses can also provide more consistent myopia control because they remain stable on the eye, unlike glasses that can slip down the face."

Three types of soft lenses approved in Canada specifically target myopia progression, including CooperVision's MiSight, Acuvue Abiliti from Johnson & Johnson and VTI's NaturalVue Lens. These lenses induce peripheral myopic defocus, a mechanism proven to slow myopia progression, explains Thakrar.

In addition to soft lenses, overnight orthokeratology presents another option for managing myopia. "During sleep, the orthokeratology lens changes the surface

of the cornea to induce peripheral myopic defocus, while allowing clear uncorrected vision during the day," says Thakrar.

Fitting and prescribing these lenses for young patients follows a straightforward process similar to single-vision daily disposable contact lenses. However, Thakrar emphasizes the importance of regular monitoring every six months to assess axial length and refractive error progression.

Advancements in lens design have made orthokeratology more accessible and customizable, notes Thakrar. "Clinically, I have seen first-hand how well these contact lenses treat myopia progression. My clinical findings are backed by many studies demonstrating the effectiveness of myopia control contact lenses."

If a child does end up wearing contact lenses, minimizing screen time (within reason) should still be a priority, she advises. That's because contact lenses increase the accommodative demand, so children with binocular vision issues may develop eye strain. **OP**

Myopia rates are on the rise in Canada, according to the Canadian Association of Optometrists.

For kids aged six to eight, only 6% are myopic, but what alarms the experts is the rapid progression.

The number of 11- to 13-year-olds with myopia is much higher at 30%, which is on par with the national average of all Canadians who experience myopia.



Get Out!

Making the most of the summer months for kids' eye health

BY DR. MARTIN SPIRO, CAO PRESIDENT

While many of us are feeling screen fatigue these days and may welcome breaks from our devices during summer holidays, kids may be less enthusiastic about cutting down on gaming and online social activities. While taking a complete screen hiatus may not be realistic, increasing time spent outside offers numerous benefits for children's eye health. Outdoor activities expose children to natural light, which plays a crucial role in regulating the growth of the eye and may have a protective effect, helping reduce the risk of myopia progression.

Additionally, outdoor play encourages children to engage their distance vision during activities such as running, playing sports or exploring nature, which can help

prevent the development or progression of myopia. Studies have shown that increased time spent outdoors is associated with a lower incidence of myopia in children. It's estimated that an increase of one hour per day of outdoor time could reduce the occurrence of myopia in children by 45%.

Summer is also an ideal time to prepare for the coming school year. Less hectic schedules allow more time for appointments that may be overdue. Ask parents and caregivers if their child has had a comprehensive eye exam in the last 12 months, and if not, encourage them to book those appointments while they are there.

Conversations are one way to remind parents and caregivers about the importance of eye exams before starting the school year, but other measures should be employed concurrently. Posters around the office and screens in your waiting room are efficient

methods for delivering messages about booking eye exams for kids, and your social media channels are a great way to reach those who haven't made it to your office yet.

You can also make your recall methods do double duty. When sending out appointment reminders, note that back-to-school time is coming, and booking exams for children helps ensure they return to school unencumbered by vision issues. Add some key facts to your recall postcards, texts and emails about the rising incidence of myopia in children, the fact that many vision issues do not have obvious symptoms, and the importance of addressing ocular conditions like amblyopia as early as possible.

Preparing for back-to-school needn't be limited to kids. It's also an opportunity for us to think about our own ongoing education and professional development.

I encourage you to take time and consider whether you're working to your full scope of practice. Identify areas where you'd like to deepen your skills — pediatric eye care, TBI treatment, dry eye, practice man-

It's estimated that an increase of one hour per day of outdoor time could reduce the occurrence of myopia in children by 45%.

agement, etc. — and commit to sourcing continuing education that will enhance your knowledge and advance your professional development.

While you relax and enjoy the summer season, I hope you'll take some time to spread the word that eye exams help ensure that kids return to school with healthy eyes and clear vision, while remaining committed to your own lifelong learning. **OP**

Dr. Martin Spiro is president of the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO). The CAO is the national voice of optometry, providing leadership and support to more than 8,300 members (optometrists, students and optometric assistants) to enhance the delivery of healthy eyes and clear vision for all Canadians.

KIDS

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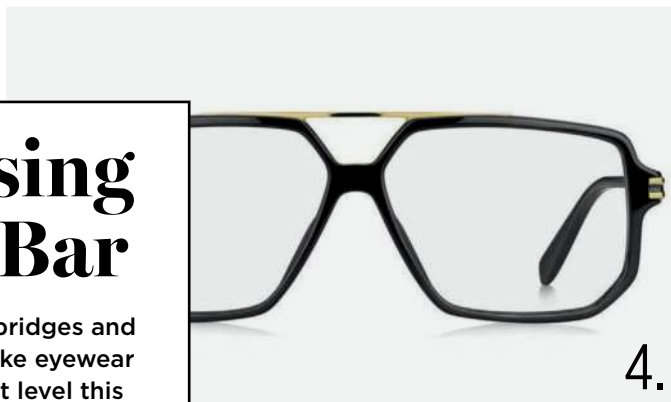
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BY SUZANNE LACORTE



1. Beluga by Etnia Barcelona 2. Mamba by Press Eyewear 3. Flat Top by Retro Super Future 4. Marc Jacobs Marc 417 by Safilo 5. Lully by Faniel 6. William by Kirk & Kirk 7. Fausto by Tom Ford 8. PO3277V by Persol



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businesses, and the Canadian eye care community, thus the introduction of the scholarship initiative as part of our Industry Investment Program. This scholarship initiative started more than six years ago and has now grown to 15 students in 2024 receiving scholarships, bursaries and awards. These programs combined with the

This scholarship initiative started more than six years ago and has now grown to 15 students in 2024 receiving scholarships, bursaries and awards

needs of independent eye care professionals have evolved over the years, and we have as well, offering a broad array of vendor partners and services, education, exclusive programs and private labels, along with our consolidated billing efficiencies. We are constantly looking for innovative programs and partners to benefit our members, their

support of industry events strengthen our commitment to the industry and align with our vision of supporting both current and future opticians.

Industry Investment Programs include NAIT Scholarships covering tuition, books and fees for the four-semester Eyeglasses Program and two-semester Contact Lens

Program that Seneca College awards each year for opticianry students; annual awards and bursaries with Douglas College, including a graduation award; and yearly awards to full-time students in the opticianry program at Georgian College. We are also committed to being a Visionary Partner of the Opticians Association of Canada, Prismatic Sponsor of the Ontario Opticians Association, and supporter of many provincial industry events. **OP**

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When Children Hurt

How ECPs can help kids and parents cope with ocular disease

BY EVRA TAYLOR

When you're a parent and your child is suffering, all you want to do is make the hurt go away.

For children with ocular conditions, the effects are psychosocial as well as physical. For their parents or caregivers, eye disease and the possible resulting vision impairment mean having to learn not only how to help their child, but also how to advocate for them — and how to navigate the ophthalmic healthcare landscape. And for eye care professionals, it means knowing how to interact with troubled parents and children, developing strategies designed to meet their needs during the examination and testing process, and when shopping for eyewear.

In 2018, the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO) reported an alarming incidence of eye disease among children, despite increased numbers of eye examinations. The CAO commissioned Nanos Research to conduct a survey to determine Canadians' access to eye health and vision care. Of those who received care, one in five children were found to have an eye disease or condition (other than a prescription for glasses or contact lenses) during the eye examination.

For children, amblyopia and strabismus were examples of previously undiagnosed eye disease. "Over the past two decades, Canadian optometrists have spent more than \$26 million dollars to raise awareness about eye health and vision care. While it's satisfying to see that our efforts to encourage Canadians to get

their eyes checked is bearing some fruit, we are disturbed at the incidence of disease that these examinations are uncovering," said Dr. Michael Dennis, past president of the CAO. "The study confirms Canada's emerging crisis in eye health and the need for a strong federal presence to make eye health and vision care a population health priority."

While myopia has gained increased awareness due to its sharply rising prevalence in recent years, other conditions such as amblyopia, strabismus and nystagmus are less known by the general public. As of 2020, 2.6% of children aged six to 19 have a visual impairment that cannot be corrected to 20/40 or better, according to the Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS). And the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability indicates that 5.4% of Canadians aged 15 years and older report having a visual disability. Although the two surveys represent different age groups, these findings suggest that individuals may still struggle with daily activities despite having some form of vision correction.

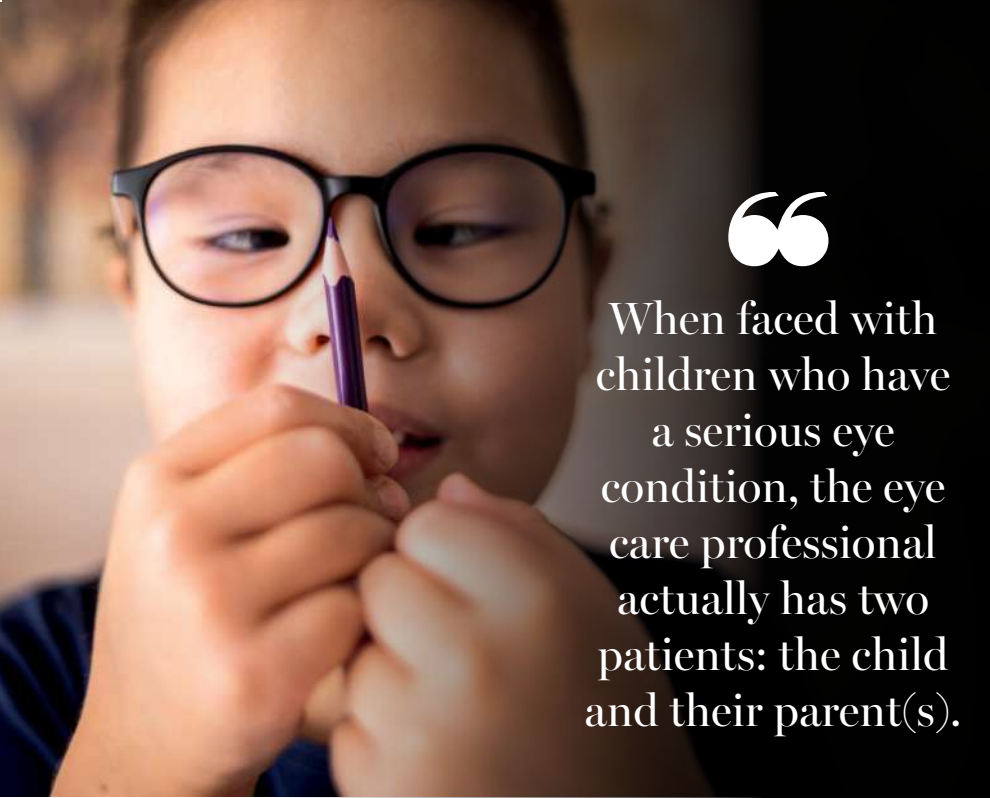
A 2019 study in the United Kingdom explored vision specialists' views on the challenges and opportunities encountered when engaging with parents and young children, and possible strategies designed to improve child/parent-centred care.¹ Two key themes that emerged related to the professional-patient relationship. The first reflects the barriers vision specialists experience when treating children, such as lack of eye health education and negative attitudes to diagnosis and treatment. The second discusses the strategies adopted to tackle those barriers.



61%

OF CANADIAN PARENTS
MISTAKENLY
believe they would know if their
child is having vision problems.

Source: Canadian Association of Optometrists



When faced with children who have a serious eye condition, the eye care professional actually has two patients: the child and their parent(s).

Three strategies were proposed to enhance child-centred eye care: improved eye health education, more personalized communication to encourage referral uptake, and the development of better coordinated pathways of care between schools, communities and hospital services.

The themes provide insights into how interactions of vision care specialists with children's and parents' beliefs may influence attitudes about eye health and treatment. The study comprised interviews with a variety of healthcare professionals. The results highlighted that treating young children differs from treating adults, and that children can struggle during the visit itself.

"A child can't really tell you what they feel, so it does take a lot more work to get the information you need. And you also have the parents there, so you have an extra pair of eyes watching what you are doing," noted one participant. "Children can also become bored straight away, or hungry or upset, and then you can't examine them easily."

The study also provided valuable insights into the challenges parents face, stating that parents' poor attendance for follow-up may be due to lack of eye health education, which prevents them from understanding the reasons for the referral letter or the diagnosis and treatment. "Parents don't necessarily understand the implication of having a lazy eye, for example,"

said a participant. "There is an element of lack of education on [eye health] for the parents to appreciate potential issues for the eyes."

The discovery of a child's vision problem or impairment can cause significant emotional stress for both the child and their parent. Sometimes there is a need for a combination of hard and soft skills when discussing

a child's eye health. From the eye care professional's point of view, this means striking a balance between the need to reinforce the medical explanation of a diagnosis and the impact it may have on families.

"Once parents see that [a vision problem in their child], they're often quite shocked and feel guilty about it — like they should have done something about it — so you have to reassure them that there is nothing they could have done," one clinician reported.

Approximately 80% of all learning comes through the visual pathways, and any interference in those pathways can inhibit children from performing to their maximum potential. According to the American Optometric Association (AOA), 25% of all children have a vision problem significant enough to impact their learning.

Strong visual skills are essential for all aspects of learning and development. Since children aren't always capable of articulating a possible vision problem or may not be willing to discuss it, it's incumbent on vision professionals to be sensitive and sensitized to potential ocular diseases and vision impairment.

In addition to early diagnosis and treatment, it's vital for eye care specialists to

A Patient-oriented Approach to Managing Interactions with Both the Child and Their Parent

THEME 1:

The clinical encounter:
challenges in children's eye care

Clinical encounters with
very young patients

Parents' eye health literacy
and reactions

THEME 2:

The professional-parent-child relation as
key to improve child eye health

Developing trust
through good
communication

Involving child and
parents in eye care

Patient-centred
advice

Source: ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7510391/

explain to parents and other carers that vision problems can have major psychosocial implications, including impact on reading, spelling, homework completion, the ability to socialize and play, concentration and attention, and visual arts.

When faced with children who have a serious eye condition, the eye care professional actually has two patients: the child and their parent(s). Optometrists can best meet their needs by providing a safe, secure environment for parents to ask their questions and voice their concerns about the physiological effects of their child's ocular condition, as well as the inevitable emotional impact on themselves and their child.

Many children may feel anxious or scared during an eye examination, particularly if it's their first time. Patience and empathy are key. Making the experience as comfortable and stress-free as possible for children can involve using specialized equipment designed for pediatric patients, such as lights and toys, and using age-appropriate language to explain the

Since eye diseases can have such a profound effect on learning and academic performance, this is the perfect opportunity to "think outside the box" of optometry by encouraging parents to discuss their child's vision challenges with teachers and seek additional learning time or one-on-one tutoring as needed. A special education teacher or a teacher of the visually impaired (TVI) can offer specialized skills, including teaching braille, assistive technology and computer skills.

The TVI is responsible for ensuring that the student has appropriate learning materials and that the classroom environment is adapted to meet the student's needs. Orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists teach individuals with visual impairments to travel safely, confidently and independently in their environment. They work on a one-to-one basis in a home, school, hospital or in the community.

Eye care professionals managing pediatric ocular conditions are ideally positioned to provide guidance in terms of treatment,

but also in the context of the psychological health of the child and their quality of life. Children who feel "different" can easily become isolated and self-critical, with major negative effects on their quality of life. Depression and anxiety can ensue, cascading to loss of enjoyment of daily activities and poor academic performance.

Mental health providers can be integrated into the child's treatment protocol as they learn to adjust to their ocular condition and its impact on their life. The parents of these children also need support as they strive to ensure the physical and emotional health of their children. Optometrists have an essential role to play in early diagnosis, treatment and coordination of care in these cases. **OP**

REFERENCE:

1 Cassetti V, Sanders, T, Bruce A. "Challenges of eye health care in children and strategies to improve treatment uptake: a qualitative study from the perspective of eye care professionals in the UK." British and Irish Orthoptic Journal. 2019; 15(1):96-104.

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Seeing Beyond Limits

Overcoming vision barriers to achieve my dream career through community support and inclusivity in the optical industry.

BY KHALIL MUSANI, Retail Partner at Specsavers Lawrence Allen Centre



Khalil Musani with his team in North York, Ontario.

At six months old, I embarked on a peculiar eye health journey shaped by my diagnoses of astigmatism, nystagmus, and achromatopsia. Looking back, I understand how unconventional it is to spend so much of your childhood visiting specialists. However, while navigating the intricacies of short-sightedness, colour blindness, and severe light sensitivity, my experience was unique in that I never felt I was treated differently by my family and peers.

Growing up, I had dreams of becoming an optometrist, but I quickly learned there were limitations to that career path due to my own vision impairment. I didn't let that stop my desire to contribute meaningfully to eye health and the industry. My parents, who never wanted me to feel like I was living in a bubble, challenged me to grow and succeed. They instilled confidence that I could do anything I put my mind to. I still hear my father's words every day: "The only thing standing in your way is you."

My mother was working at a Specsavers in the UK – the same Specsavers location that showed me so much care when I was fitted for new glasses at 11 years old. It was the care I received during my first fitting that drew me to the company. Marked by my positive eye care experiences in my adolescence, I began

working part-time at that location, caring for customers and conducting pre-test screenings.

At that time, I was 16 years old with no retail experience, but Specsavers welcomed me and provided the training I needed. My time at Specsavers has been transformative. It was inspiring to many people to see my career progression and the opportunities that could exist for me, despite perceived challenges with vision impairment. I found fulfillment in roles that exceeded my initial expectations, and I became an in-store trainer at the age of 19. I started the role shy and unsure how to motivate and train 30 colleagues at once, but it took no time for my passion to take over and drive my success. It's been the journey of a lifetime from then to now.

Mentoring and leading others to share the same passion for quality care and service was my calling, and I gained confidence in the realization that I had found what I was born to do. My journey exemplifies a career at Specsavers, where opportunities to grow feel endless and individuals are supported to feel successful, regardless of their background or challenges.

When opportunity came knocking again, I embraced it and started my own business as the Retail Partner of Specsavers Lawrence

"Embrace your unique identity, regardless of your perceived challenges..."

Allen Centre. Becoming a business owner of an optical retail store represented a culmination of my aspirations – to lead my own team

and make a tangible impact on eye health outcomes. I have embraced this role thanks to the unwavering support from the Specsavers community and my family.

The robust support system provided by Specsavers, both in the UK and Canada, has been central to my success. From mentorship programs to a dedicated retail support team, Specsavers has equipped me with the tools and resources needed to excel on this path. This support extends beyond professional realms, encompassing a culture of inclusivity and camaraderie that fosters personal growth and resilience.

As I reflect on my lived experience so far, my two pieces of advice for individuals in similar shoes to me are: embrace your unique identity, regardless of perceived challenges or limitations, and lean on your support system – people will help you get to where you need to go.

Whatever barrier you might have, I hope you seize opportunities, overcome hurdles, and defy expectations. And remember, you are not alone in your journey when you have a great team behind you. **OP**

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Dr. Sylvia Wai
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Jessica Benson, RO
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Our optometry partners come to us from all kinds of backgrounds. Some were associates ready to make the leap to clinic ownership for the first time, while others already had businesses of their own. The great thing about our partnerships is flexibility – it doesn't really matter how you're starting out with us, we can find a way to make it work.

All you need to do is start the conversation and we'll figure out the rest, whether that's converting your existing premises, transferring your business to a new location, or starting out completely fresh.



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Building Your Business

Creative marketing strategies to attract new customers

BY NANCY DEWALD

As a support to my clients, I am always looking for new, different and creative ways to market their businesses. There are many ways to attract new patients/customers, and they don't have to cost an excessive amount of money.

This article presents some cost-effective strategies to help you get the word out.

1 FORM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Finding and teaming up with another complementary business can create a natural referral engine for both. This can be approached in many ways.

The keys to success are identifying the right partner and ensuring that the arrangement is mutually beneficial. Be sure the business you select has good standing in the community and is aligned with your values.

Choose partners who are interested in growing together, reaching new audiences and sharing the journey. Some examples could include clothing stores, hair salons/barbers, estheticians, travel agents, etc.

Here are some ways to partner:

- › Offer a cross-promotion where each business provides a discount to the other's customers when they purchase.
- › Cross-market on social media, post content featuring each other, have a draw for customers who follow both businesses.
- › Display each other's product onsite.
- › Participate together in patient/customer makeovers, fashion shows, etc.

2 USE INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencers leverage the power of word of mouth to promote a product and/or your business in general. Research shows that 92% of consumers trust influencer marketing, and 75% of marketers find it to be an effective strategy.

- › Start by identifying the content your target audience follows, then match an influencer to that audience (source websites to find local influencers).
- › Work out an agreement. Sometimes there is a fee, and sometimes influencers will exchange posts for products.

3 CRAFT EMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS

This strategy involves creating an emotional connection that gives meaning and depth to the experience of the brand.

Here's a great example executed by Molson: For years, many women's hockey players' hair has covered their last names on their jerseys. Now, Molson's sponsorship of the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL) is moving players' names

to the bottom of their jerseys so they are visible on the ice. “We covered our name so hers could be seen,” reads the tagline in the company’s emotional “See My Name” campaign.

We have so many great wins and opportunities to share — after all, we help people see. As a reminder, we must get the patient’s permission before sharing their stories or photos.

4 DISSEMINATE DISCOUNT CARDS

Your team can extend a discount card to a potential new patient. This happens outside of the office; the idea is to bring new people into the office. Whenever your team is out and the topic of eyewear comes up, they can offer these cards. It makes the team feel empowered, and the potential patient feels that they’re getting special treatment.

5 JOIN BUSINESS NETWORKING GROUPS

Participants in networking groups are often looking to grow their business, and in turn, they can support your business. Look for groups that are active and have good attendance. I recently joined a group and have added two new clients through related referrals.

6 GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Do some good old-fashioned networking and connecting! Business owners like to feel that they have a connection with other businesses in their area. If they feel comfortable with your office, they will tell their customers about you.

7 SHARE THE PROBLEMS YOU SOLVE

Create social media posts about the problems you can solve with current technology,

versus just sharing the science behind the technology. To understand what is important to your patients, go to your reviews and see what problems you have solved for your current patient base.

8 MAKE THE MOST OF WINDOW DISPLAYS

Windows can be your silent salesperson, so keep them current and exciting. Always be sure that your displays are to scale — for example, for walk-by traffic you can display product, whereas attracting the attention of drive-by traffic requires large graphics or signs.

Good luck and happy marketing! **OP**

Nancy Dewald is a business development professional, workshop facilitator and optical industry veteran. She is CEO and founder of Lead Up Training and Consulting, which specializes in identifying business gaps, implementing solutions and developing leaders. To find out more, visit leaduptrainingandconsulting.com.



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**EARLY BIRD
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The Art of Healing

Dr. Sareya Khatkur combines art and optometry to make a difference

BY DAVID GOLDBERG

The photo confirmed Dr. Sareya Khatkur's worst suspicions. She stared at the reflections in her baby girl's eyes — tell-tale signs of a possible retinoblastoma diagnosis. Confirmed the next day by ophthalmologists at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Khatkur's at-home test with a flash photo led to an early diagnosis that two other pediatricians had missed during previous exams.

After several chemotherapy sessions and laser surgeries, Khatkur's daughter was cancer-free. "If I had not been an optometrist myself, what would life look like for her?," the mother wonders.

As founder of Brantford Optometry in Brantford, Ontario, Khatkur meets with parents every week, and at least one of them will naively ask if they should bring their five- or six-year-old to the eye doctor for the first time.

"How has our healthcare system failed this badly to inform parents about the importance of infant eye examinations?," laments Khatkur. "This could save kids' lives."

She runs her clinic with her husband Sati, who handles the day-to-day business affairs of Brantford Optometry so his wife can focus on treatment. Bringing Sati on board was integral to the practice's success, says Khatkur. "He is my partner in everything. The practice is as much his as it is mine."

Back in high school, Khatkur wrestled with whether to study optometry or visual arts. She earned her optometry degree from the



University of Waterloo, and now she's found a way to combine both passions.

Last year, she designed and launched an "eyeWEAR" clothing brand called 5•17 (both Khatkur and her daughter, Avanya, were born on May 17). Every design is hand embroidered using especially eye-catching colours, and Khatkur donates partial proceeds from sales to retinoblastoma research.

The apparel designs resemble Khatkur's artistic style in her paintings, many of which hang in her clinic. And of course, every work has an optometric twist.

"I don't always go into it to involve eyes, but they end up being a focal point in almost anything I do," she says.

For 5•17, she wanted to design casual wear with striking beadwork and embroidery, hoping the items will strike up a conversation about retinoblastoma and the importance of infant eye exams. After all, not everyone can be as lucky as Avanya to have an eye doctor for a mother.

Brushstrokes for Success

After founding her clinic in 2011, Dr. Sareya Khatkur recognized that the people of Brantford had limited access to advanced eye care services. To ensure that her community didn't fall behind, she doubled the square footage of the clinic to include an optical dispensary, dry eye treatment services and a medi-spa.

She offers these tips to help other ECPs make treatments more accessible and maximize their success.

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH SUPERSTARS

"I wrote my high school notes in pen on loose leaf paper — no hole punch. Somehow I was still at the top of my class, but when you run a business, you need to be organized," says Khatkur.

She advises hiring according to strengths and looking for people who have those all-important "unteachable skills."

"We can train staff to operate machines and make frame displays, but you can't teach a person how to be a genuinely caring human being," she says. "I've hired two people just from recognizing that quality in them."

PATIENT PAYMENT PLANS

"We wanted to ensure that our patients could get the treatments they need, but also make those treatments more accessible financially," notes Khatkur.

"We give patients the option to purchase whatever treatment they need under financing so they can pay monthly. And all the approvals are done in a few minutes. So it's not a lengthy process that's going to tie up your staff members."

NEVER STOP LEARNING

"I am forever a student, always learning and pursuing excellence," says Khatkur. "You need to realize and recognize that you can learn something from pretty much every single person you talk to, to better yourself."

"I always feel like she was meant to be my baby because I'm an eye doctor," says Khatkur. "She was meant for us."

Visit mayseventeenth.com to learn more. **OP**

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Motorcycle Safety

The importance of proper eye protection

BY ROBERT DALTON, OAC

The arrival of summer means that many of us, myself included, eagerly hit the open road on our favourite motorcycle. While remembering

to don our protective jackets and DOT-approved helmets is paramount, it is equally crucial to ensure that we have proper eye protection.

Those accustomed to wearing open-face helmets are particularly aware of the discomfort caused by bugs, debris, rocks or dust hitting the eyes. Such incidents can result in permanent eye damage or, at the very least, temporary impairment that could lead to collision. Coupled with the usual threat of UV exposure, wearing some form of eye protection is essential.

However, beyond simply wearing eye protection to ensure physical protection, there are other factors to consider, and ECPs can play a role in educating their customers about motorcycle eye safety.

First, with only two wheels on the road, it becomes even more crucial for riders to ensure that their eyewear lenses are optically ground, since experiencing dizziness while riding could have catastrophic consequences. Alert your patients to beware of imitation products and rely instead on trusted brands with a long-standing presence in the sports industry, such as Bollé, Serengeti, Maui Jim, Nike or Oakley. Substandard lenses are prone to shattering upon impact with debris like rocks.



Riders must always have their prescription verified by a licensed optician to ensure it is current, and should take the time to acclimate to their new glasses, especially if they have had a prescription change (it's good practice to wear them while walking before hitting the road). ECPs can ask if the glasses will be used for riding a motorcycle, as this may require a slightly adjusted prescription or specialty lens type, depending on the client's vision needs.

It is worth noting to riders that as they ride and their position relative to the sun shifts — especially during sunset — they may feel the need to adjust their tint. While one option is to switch to a secondary pair of glasses with a lighter tint after parking their bike, a more convenient solution is to trust in Transitions lenses (a valued visionary partner of the OAC).

Contrary to popular belief, Transitions glasses are not limited to a single type of lens. Our partners at Transitions are continually

refining their product, now offering lenses that adjust tint more rapidly than before. Even if a patient already uses Transitions lenses while driving, invite them to check out the latest technology. They will likely notice a significant difference, especially during changing light conditions.

Ensuring proper eye protection while riding a motorcycle is paramount for safety on the road. From optical ground lenses to adaptive light technology like Transitions lenses, riders have a range of options to enhance their vision and protect their eyes from potential hazards. By prioritizing education, quality eyewear and advancements in lens technology, you can help riders enjoy a safer and more comfortable experience on their journeys. **OP**

Robert Dalton is the executive director of the Opticians Association of Canada (OAC). The OAC's mission is to promote licensed opticians and the profession, maintain professional standards, and educate and inform consumers about eye health. For more information, visit opticians.ca.

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Picture Perfect

Everything you need to know about taking patient portraits

BY HAILEY DIRK, MARKETING4ECPS

As an eye care professional, you strive to help your patients see and feel great — and what better way to show that off than with a great portrait photo?

Here are some tips to help you take the perfect photograph of your patients in their new glasses.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT CAMERA

If possible, avoid using your cell phone. A DSLR (digital single-lens reflex) camera is perfect for portrait photography and should be mounted on a tripod for security and stability.

FIND YOUR LIGHT

Your lighting will depend on your location and the time of day. If you're new to photography, you may get the best results by going outside, as you'll have access to natural light. When you can, aim for a "golden hour" (the last hour before sunset or the first hour after sunrise).

If you choose to shoot indoors, your lighting setup doesn't need to be fancy. For best results, you can use two floor lamps placed on both sides of the patient, at a 45-degree angle and about two feet away.

PROFESSIONAL BACKDROPS

The right backdrop can take your portraits to the next level.

Look back at your yearbook photos. Chances are, the backdrop was some variety of grey or blue. These muted colours are perfect for capturing skin tones without distorting them.

Backdrops are made of canvas and paper, usually in six-foot-wide rolls. You can attach the backdrop to your ceiling and let it drape onto the floor, or you can purchase a backdrop stand.

POSING & POSITIONING

You'll want to capture photos from three angles for every patient: straight front, a 45-degree angle from the left, and a 45-degree angle from the right. Mark each position on the floor with tape or a magic marker so your patients can see where to place their feet.

Providing a seat can help patients feel more comfortable and simplify the positioning process. The ideal seat is an armless, adjustable-height swivel chair that doesn't restrict movement for larger and taller patients. Take close-up photos of the patient's full face at these angles, and if you need closer details of the eye area, you can enlarge and crop the pictures later.

Remember, some patients can feel insecure or just dread having their pictures taken. You can gently remind a shy patient that these photos help educate new patients and offer a glimpse into the eyewear your practice carries.



Your social media pages are the ideal place to feature your patients and their new eyewear.

Depending on your location, you may need to have patients sign a release. Be sure to check with a legal professional and stay compliant with any legal requirements.

PHOTOGRAPHING PATIENTS WEARING GLASSES

Glare in glasses can distract from your patient's most important feature: the eyes!

Glare comes from light reflecting off the lenses and into the camera. Luckily, glare can always be predicted: light comes from a

source and shines onto the glasses at a certain angle and reflects back at that same angle but in the opposite direction.

To avoid glare, simply don't put your camera where the reflection is shining, and you won't see any glare in the photograph.

REDUCING GLARE IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Try to avoid moving your patient around to reduce glare.

Your patients could already feel nervous about having their portrait taken, and it's

important to make sure they know that glare isn't their fault or their glasses' fault. It's your responsibility as the photographer to pose them in a position that won't show glare.

Don't say, "There's glare on your glasses, so turn your head." Instead, say, "Please turn your head a little this way." Don't mention the glasses or the glare.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Once you've taken the perfect photo, what do you do with it? Your social media pages are the ideal place to feature your patients and their new eyewear.

Eye care marketing experts can help you develop a social media strategy that takes your practice — and your portraits — to the next level. **OP**

Hailey Dirk is an internal marketing strategist at Marketing4ECps, where she crafts articles about the dynamic digital landscape. Learn more about Hailey and Marketing4ECps at marketing4ecps.com.



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LEO



JULY 23 – AUGUST 22

Astrological signs say a lot about someone's personality – which in turn is reflected in their sense of style. Here's the "eyewear horoscope" for this month's zodiac sign.

Leo is often associated with boldness, creativity and confidence. As such, their sense of style tends to reflect these traits.

Leos are drawn to statement pieces, luxurious fabrics and vibrant colours that command attention. They often opt for bold prints, such as animal prints or geometric patterns, and they enjoy wearing gold jewelry to enhance their regal energy.

In terms of colours, Leos are fond of warm hues like yellow, gold, red and orange, as well as rich jewel tones like royal blue and emerald green that highlight their charismatic personality.

Famous Leos include Jennifer Lopez, Sandra Bullock, Helen Mirren, Halle Berry, Steve Martin, Robert De Niro and Jason Momoa. **OP**



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