

# OPTICAL PRISM

NOV/DEC 2025 • VOL. 43 • NO. 10

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## Gear Up

Why the future of men's eyewear is wired, wearable, and seriously cool

### LESS TALK, MORE TRUST

The power of listening in every exam room

# MAN CRUSH

We're crushing hard on the latest men's eyewear, sleek designs that blend timeless masculinity with modern precision

## Beyond Burnout

Restoring balance, purpose, and professional passion

### MEET THE MINDS CHANGING EYE CARE

The Canadian duo redefining how the brain and vision connect

### DAD WORE IT FIRST

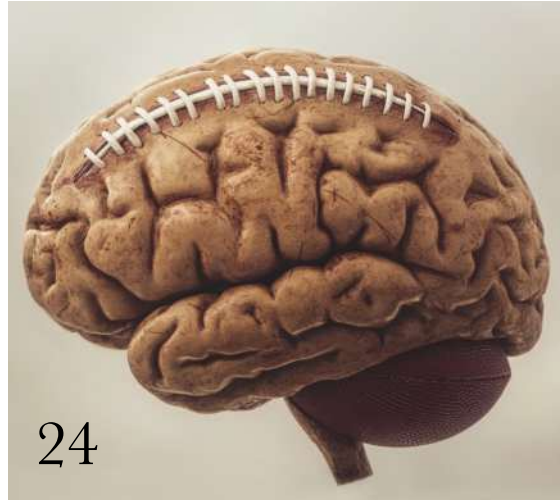
The 'dad glasses' revival is here, sleeker, sharper, and cooler than ever

### STYLED FOR SUCCESS

How eyewear turned one man's style into strategy



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P A R I S



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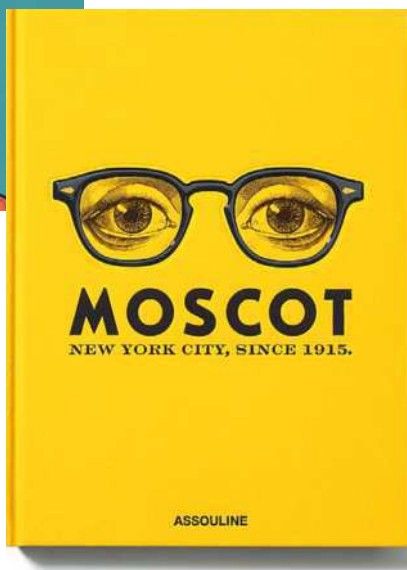
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COVER: Taylor Fritz wearing BOSS courtesy of the Safilo Group

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

A man with dark, curly hair and glasses is looking thoughtfully to the right. He is wearing a red, textured sweater and holding a black pen in his right hand, which is resting on a white notebook. The background is a blurred grid pattern, possibly a window or a wall.

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A photograph of two men standing in a Specsavers store. The man on the left is wearing a dark grey suit and glasses. The man on the right is wearing a light beige suit and glasses. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a counter with computer monitors and a large pair of glasses on display. The word 'Specsavers' is partially visible on the wall behind them.

**Mandeep Sandhu, RO**  
Retail Partner  
Specsavers Centre  
on Barton

**Dr. Simron Gill**  
Optometry Partner  
Specsavers Centre  
on Barton

**Specsavers**



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSICA WAUGH

# Man Made Vision

Every year, our Men's Issue gives me an excuse to dive into the styles, tech, and trends shaping how men see, and show up, in the world. And this one might be my favourite yet.

Let's start with our Style Eyes pictorial, where Dad Vibes are having a serious moment. Oversized aviators, thick acetates, that perfectly confident "I-know-who-I-am" energy, these frames have swagger. They remind us that what was once your dad's sensible pair is now the season's must-have statement. It's nostalgia, upgraded. There's something deeply human about that, the way style circles back and suddenly feels fresh again. It's a reminder that reinvention doesn't mean erasing the past, but reframing it.

Speaking of reinvention, we're talking smart glasses, the ultimate gear for men who love their toys. They stream, record, and connect, all while looking better than ever. This isn't sci-fi anymore; it's sleek, wearable innovation that's redefining what eyewear can do (and what men expect from it). For those of us in eye care, it's exciting to see this intersection of fashion, technology, and function take real shape.

We're also shining a light on Neuroptek, a Canadian company at the forefront of neuro-ophthalmic diagnostics. Founded by Dr. Neda Ansari and Dr. Behzad Mansouri, Neuroptek is proof that big innovation doesn't just happen in Silicon Valley, it happens right here in Canada. Their work is helping ECPs detect and treat vision issues that begin in the brain, bridging the gap between neurology and optometry in ways that could change how we think about vision health entirely.

On the style side, Wendy Buchanan shares the story of a male client whose eyewear evolution mirrors his professional growth. It's a reminder that when men start seeing eyewear as part of their personal brand, everything, from confidence to credibility, comes into sharper focus.

And finally, David Goldberg takes us into the trenches with a look at occupational eye protection in male-dominated industries. Two hundred Canadians injure their eyes at work every day, 90 per cent preventable. That's a stat worth seeing clearly.

Here's to men who know that vision isn't just about how you see, it's how you're seen. And to the ECPs helping them look sharp, stay safe, and see their best every day.

SUZANNE LACORTE  
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

“

“Every major tech player is now chasing the same holy grail: a wearable device so powerful, so stylish and so intuitive that it becomes the one thing you never leave home without.”

- MATTHEW DRINKWATER





**GLOBAL EYEWEAR,  
GOLD STANDARD.**

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FRESH LOOKS

**BRUNELLO  
CUCINELLI**

Brunello Cucinelli's Fall-Winter 2025 eyewear collection with Essilor-Luxottica embodies timeless elegance and modern refinement. Crafted in ultra-fine acetate and lightweight titanium—with select styles plated in 18-karat gold—the designs balance sculptural form and effortless comfort. Rooted in Cucinelli's signature restraint and craftsmanship, the collection redefines eyewear as a natural extension of personal style: light, versatile, and quietly luxurious.

**For more information,  
contact your Essilor  
Luxottica sales  
representative or visit:  
[essilorluxottica.com](https://www.essilorluxottica.com)**

BC2013ST

*Fresh*  
**LOOKS**

Keep your eyewear options fresh with the latest models from these leading companies



**PUCCI**

Pucci's Fall-Winter eyewear collection fuses archival heritage with bold new energy. Vibrant colour palettes and iconic patterns—like the dynamic Iride and marbled Marmo—transform both optical and sunglass styles into radiant statements. Sculpted shapes range from slim, feminine ovals to voluminous “puffy” designs, all enhanced by refined milling, Havana zebra accents and the brand's signature fishtail motif. The intertwined double-fish logo, elegantly embedded in the hinges, completes each frame with unmistakable Pucci flair. A standout acetate optical model captures the collection's spirit, blending retro-



EP5271



LO796S



inspired geometry with modern attitude. It's classic Pucci: joyful, graphic and endlessly expressive.

**For more information, contact your Marcolin sales representative or visit: [marcolin.com](http://marcolin.com)**

**LONGCHAMP**

Longchamp's Fall-Winter 2025 eyewear collection reinterprets the Maison's Parisian heritage with bold silhouettes, refined materials, and a confident feminine energy. The stand-out LO796S sunglasses, crafted from plant-based resin in line with the brand's sustainability vision—feature a sculptural shield shape and the signature Horse emblem

on the temples. Shown in the Fall/Winter campaign in Metallic Burgundy, Rose, and Yellow, and also offered in classic Black, the style embodies Longchamp's effortless blend of elegance, innovation, and Parisian allure.

**For more information, contact your Marchon sales representative or visit: [marchon.com](http://marchon.com)**



Urvinum



Pontos



Spoletum

**BAYRIA EYEWEAR**

Bayria Eyewear celebrates the bold spirit of 1980s Milan with its Fall-Winter 2025 Milano Manifesto collection—a tribute to the city's golden age of design, culture, and power dressing. The line reinterprets the decade's oversized shapes and architectural details through meticulous Italian craftsmanship. Standout styles include Pontos, with

sculptural temples and playful contrasts; Urvinum, a refined take on the classic aviator; and Spoletum, with its dramatic double bridge. Each frame captures Milan's enduring duality—rigorous yet rebellious, polished yet provocative.

**For more information, contact your Bayria Eyewear sales representative or visit: [bayriaeyewear.com](http://bayriaeyewear.com)**

**FRESH LOOKS**

**SUNDAY SOMEWHERE**

Sunday Somewhere's latest optical collection, distributed by WestGroupe, captures nature's quiet elegance through refined design and 70s-inspired confidence. Each frame reflects the organic geometry of natural crystals, infused with sun-washed hues of teal, rose, and havana. The standout model, Peridot (SS1066), reimagines Parisian chic with soft cat-eye curves and playful retro charm, blending vintage appeal with effortless modern sophistication.

**For more information, contact your WestGroupe sales representative or visit: [westgroupe.com](http://westgroupe.com)**

**SILHOUETTE**

Silhouette introduces the new SPX Illusion, a collection blending comfort and sophistication. Two new shapes, including a striking geometric design, are paired with six trend-driven colorways such as Canary Green Havana and Smoky Blossom. Refined and featherlight, these frames offer a stylish way to express personality with creativity and elegance.

**For more information, contact your Canadian Optical Supply representative or visit: [canadianoptical.com](http://canadianoptical.com)**



SS1066



Cassia



Shale



SPX Illusion 2978



Vanni 1804

**GEORGES ET PHINA**

Winner of the SILMO d'Or Award, VANNI's Model 1804 from the EXTRA collection stands out for its strong design and refined construction. Cut from 8 mm acetate, it features continuous nose pads for comfort and a faceted profile that lightens the bold

**GIGI STUDIOS**

GIGI Studios introduces ROOTS, a capsule collection inspired by the quiet strength and cyclical beauty of nature. Merging geometric precision with organic flow, the line reflects balance, growth, and transformation. Crafted in collaboration with Mazzucchelli, the exclusive mineral-veined acetates add striking depth and chromatic richness. Standout styles like Shale, Moss, and Cassia pair earthy tones of black, havana, green, and grey with refined silhouettes that capture authenticity, permanence, and contemporary elegance.

**For more information, contact your GIGI Studios sales representative or visit: [gigistudios.com](http://gigistudios.com)**



front. The result is a frame that's distinctive yet balanced - expressive in form, precise in detail, and true to VANNI's Italian craftsmanship.

**For more information, contact your Georges et Phina sales representative or visit: [georgesetphina.com](http://georgesetphina.com)**

# *Silhouette*



Empower Your Lightness

## FRESH LOOKS



Zak

### OLIVER GOLDSMITH

Oliver Goldsmith celebrates its near-centenary with five new WINTERSUN styles, each revived from the Goldsmith family archive and making their debut this season. Handcrafted in Japan, the frames pair translucent Mazzucchelli acetates with softly tinted Divel lenses in a rich autumn palette. Custom core wires inspired by vintage car pedals, sculpted temples, and gold detailing elevate the design. As Creative Director Claire Goldsmith notes, these frames are “a celebration of our extraordinary archive, reinterpreted for a modern audience.” Distinctive, refined, and enduring—true to the brand’s timeless vision.

**For more information, contact your Oliver Goldsmith sales representative or visit: [olivergoldsmith.com](http://olivergoldsmith.com)**



### HELIUM

Match Eyewear expands its Helium Collection with Helium Expanse—a capsule of larger-sized men’s frames that balance bold proportions with precision craftsmanship. The eight-piece Mixed Materials Edit features titanium, acetate, and hybrid designs handcrafted in Japan and Italy using premium Mazzucchelli acetate and

ultra-light titanium. Each frame embodies strength and sophistication, combining distinctive design with superior fit. With this latest release, Helium Expanse redefines men’s eyewear with scale, style, and substance.

**For more information, contact your Match sales representative or visit: [matcheyewear.com](http://matcheyewear.com)**



HE-1917



HE-1997

### KALEOS

A bold take on a timeless silhouette, Lasker, a square-shaped frame from Spanish eyewear label Kaleos, redefines retro with precision. Handcrafted in high-density acetate, its clean geometry and confident lines strike the perfect balance between nostalgia and modernity. Understated yet undeniably present, this is classic design evolved.

**For more information, contact your Kaleos sales representative or visit: [kaleoscollection.com](http://kaleoscollection.com)**



Lasker





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# GEAR UP



**Why smart glasses are the ultimate upgrade for men who love their gear**

BY NICK SAMSON

**L**et's be honest, guys don't just wear gear, we invest in it. The boots that get better with age. The smart-watch that tracks every heartbeat and hill climb. The bike that practically hums with precision. Until now, eyewear was lagging behind. Necessary? Yes. Stylish? Sure. But tech-forward? Not even close.

That's changing fast.

At Vision Expo West in Las Vegas, I went hands-on with the newest smart eyewear from Meta, Ray-Ban, Oakley, Lucyd and Reebok, and let me tell you, the gear drawer just got an upgrade.

These aren't clunky prototypes or Bluetooth sunglasses circa 2012. This is serious wearable tech, designed for how men actually live, move and multitask. Whether you're a runner, cyclist, commuter or simply a guy who values next-gen functionality in a sleek frame, smart glasses have officially arrived, and they're here to impress.

### **What Guys Want from Gear**

Here's the thing about men and technology: we're not looking for gimmicks. We want tools that make us better — smarter, faster, more efficient. Gear that works.





“I believe glasses will be the ideal form factor to eventually deliver super-intelligence, and I’m excited for what’s next.”

- MARK ZUCKERBERG

FACEBOOK



That's why smart glasses are finally making sense. With voice control, turn-by-turn navigation, hands-free calls and open-ear audio that keeps you aware of your surroundings, they enhance daily life without demanding a lifestyle overhaul.

And for those of us in the optical industry, they offer a fresh, tech-driven way to get male patients excited about eyewear again.

### **RAY-BAN META GEN 2: The Smartest Frame That Doesn't Show Off**

I started here because I own a pair of Gen 1s, and they're awesome. From what I saw and heard at the EssilorLuxottica booth, Gen 2 takes everything up a notch in both tech and performance.

Not every guy wants his specs screaming "I'm techy." That's where Gen 2 shines. It looks like your favourite Ray-Bans but hides some seriously smart upgrades: eight-hour battery life; 12MP hands-free photo and 3K video capture; live streaming; music and calls; voice AI assistant; live translation; conversation focus (coming soon); accessibility support and more.

It's intuitive, discreet and built for everyday wear. I used my Gen 1s all over the tradeshow floor, no ear fatigue, no fuss, just seamless function. I can only imagine how incredible Gen 2 will be.

With multiple shapes, colours and Transitions® Gen S lens options, Gen 2 is ideal for the guy who loves tech but prefers to keep it low-key.

### **META RAY-BAN DISPLAY: Futuristic Function in a Familiar Frame**

What blew me away about the new Meta Ray-Ban Display is how normal it looks, and how wildly advanced it is. Behind those classic Wayfarer lenses sits a full-colour visual display that shows messages, maps, photo previews and more, right in your field of vision.

The wild part? You control it with tiny finger twitches, thanks to the Meta Neural Band, an EMG wristband that reads muscle signals. No tapping, no swiping, just subtle gestures that feel like telepathy.

With Transitions lenses, RX compatibility and more than eight hours of battery life, it's not just smart, it's surprisingly wearable. Launching now in the U.S. and landing in Canada in 2026, it starts at \$799 US.

If your clients love high-tech gear that still feels human, this one's a conversation starter.

### **OAKLEY META VANGUARD: Data-Driven, Athlete-Approved**

If you're into cycling, running or trail work, Oakley's Meta Vanguard is next-level. Designed for movement, it features open-ear audio that cuts through wind, a 12MP camera with a 122-degree field of view and seamless integration with Garmin and Strava for real-time performance feedback.

PRIZM™ lenses keep visibility crisp, and the IP67 rating means dust and water are non-issues. Battery life runs nine hours, with another 36 from the charging case, and the fit is helmet-friendly.

I tried these during a demo ride and was blown away by how natural the audio felt, like having a personal coach in your ear.

### **LUCYD: Smart Made Simple**

Not every guy wants a full heads-up display. Some just want to take calls, play music and get directions without earbuds or a screen. Lucyd nails that niche.

Their frames look like standard optical eyewear, nothing flashy, but deliver open-ear speakers, Bluetooth

5.2, voice-assistant access and more than eight hours of battery life. Most models sell for under \$200 US and come with photochromic, polarized or blue-light lenses.

Lucyd's brand collaborations with Nautica, Eddie Bauer and Reebok bring familiar lifestyle aesthetics into the smart space, a smart move.

**REEBOK SMART EYEWEAR:  
Built for Movement**

This line was a standout. Feather-light, no-slip fit, polarized lenses and sweat-proof durability, it's built like gym gear, not office wear.

Perfect for men who live active lives but don't want to fuss with headphones or bulky tech. Think morning jogs, yard work or bike commutes.

This is smart eyewear guys don't have to think twice about, and that's exactly the point.

**LUCYD ARMOR: Safety Meets Smarts**

ECPs serving industrial or trade clients should take note. Lucyd's Armor line isn't just smart, it's certified safe for Canada. Approved under CAN/CSA Z94.3:20, it meets both Canadian and ANSI Z87.1 impact-protection standards, making it job-site ready.

With open-ear audio, voice-assistant access and long battery life, these frames replace both safety glasses and earbuds, ideal for contractors, technicians or anyone needing hands-free function without compromising safety.

**Why Men Are Finally Leaning In**

Smart glasses used to be a tough sell, too bulky, too niche, too complicated. Not anymore.

Designs are sleeker. Interfaces are smoother. The benefits are obvious. These glasses help guys do more, without doing more.

Whether it's the athlete tracking his stats, the dad fielding calls while pushing a stroller or the contractor streaming his playlist on-site, this category finally has a "for him" angle that clicks.

# NICK'S PICKS

**What to Stock for Different Guys**

**1. The Futurist  
Meta Ray-Ban Display**  
For the tech-savvy guy who wants the latest innovation—gesture control, HUD display, full connectivity.

**2. The Multitasker  
Ray-Ban Meta Gen 2**  
For the man who takes calls, tunes in, and moves fast. Looks classic but works hard.

**3. The Athlete  
Oakley Meta Vanguard**  
Built for sweat, speed, and stats. Open-ear audio, GPS integration, PRIZM lenses.

**4. The Active Dad  
Reebok Smart Eyewear**  
Sweat-proof, no-slip, polarized. Great for workouts, coaching, or yard work with the kids around.

**5. The Practical Guy  
Lucyd Lyte**  
Effortless Bluetooth eyewear designed for everyday life. Take calls, stream music, or get directions—all in one streamlined, minimalist frame.

**6. The Tradesman  
Lucyd Armor**  
ANSI-rated smart safety glasses for industrial pros who need protection and connection.



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.

**How to Sell It to Guys**

Start with the why. Ask what they do, run, drive, work outdoors, manage a team, then connect it to a feature that makes that task easier. Frame it as gear that works, not a novelty.

Lead with the specs that matter: battery life, polarized protection, prescription-ready lenses. Men trust data more than marketing fluff.

**Skip the jargon.** Don't start with "AR capabilities." Say, "You can get texts while biking without touching your phone."

**Be upfront about limitations.** Slightly bulkier temples? Brightness fade in full sun? Say it. Honesty builds trust, and makes the next feature sound even stronger.

**Demo the cool factor.** Have one frame paired and ready to go. Play a song or take a call, it's the fastest way to make the tech feel effortless.

**Match the frame to the lifestyle:**

**Drivers:** Aviators with polarized lenses

**Minimalists:** Thin metals with display tech

**Adventurers:** Rugged acetates balancing battery weight

And finally, stock variety. From Meta's cutting-edge display to Lucyd's plug-and-play simplicity, men choose their tech the same way they choose their trucks, based on needs and how it looks in the mirror.

Smart glasses aren't about looking futuristic. They're about being prepared, and guys love being prepared.

**The Opportunity for ECPs**

For practices looking to stand out in a crowded market, smart eyewear is a game-changer. It draws tech-savvy patients through the door and gives loyal ones something new to get excited about.

Because let's face it, if we don't carry it, Best Buy and online retailers will.

Offer fitting, demos, RX options and after-sale support, and suddenly your dispensary isn't just a place to buy glasses, it's a place to gear up.



**MERCH that MOVES**

**Tips for Merchandising Smart Eyewear to Men**

**Make it Hands-On**  
Set up a demo station. Let male patients try answering a call or playing a podcast on the spot.

**Simplify the Story**  
Use plain signage: "Talk. Text. Navigate. No phone in hand." Skip the specs (unless asked).

**Mirror Matters**  
Display styles on male mannequins or alongside "gear guy" accessories (bike helmet, toolbox, watch). Connect it visually to things men already value.

**Staff Tip**  
Have at least one team member rock smart specs daily. It invites questions and shows wearability.

**Final Thoughts from the Floor**

After spending time with these brands in Vegas, one thing is clear: this category has turned a corner.

- Meta Ray-Ban Display offers next-gen interaction on every level.
- Gen 2 is sleek, seamless and packed with technology.
- Oakley Vanguard turns sport into science.
- Lucyd keeps it simple and sharp.

- Reebok makes it rugged and real.
  - Lucyd Armor makes it job-site ready.
- For guys like me who live for functional gear that fits, smart glasses are finally delivering. And for ECPs? It's not just a new product, it's a new conversation. Because eyewear has officially joined the gear club, and men are ready to make it their next favourite tool. **OP**



# Save the Date



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March 11-14, 2026

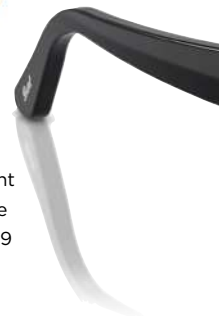
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# DAD VIBES

He had the car, the sideburns, the specs, and a whole lot of swagger. Now it's your turn to make them yours.

BY SUZANNE LACORTE



1. David Beckham DB7153 by Safilo 2. Mr. Leight Wright CML1026 by Garrett Leight 3. OTP216 by WestGroupe 4. Murray by Erkers 5. Branson by Erkers 6. BOSS 1849 by Safilo 7. Persol Po3347v by EssilorLuxottica 8. Calvin Klein CK25548 by Marchon



4.



*Style*  
**TIP**

Dad vibes are trending, and I don't mean socks and sandals! Think bold acetates, oversized aviators, and that effortless "cool without trying" energy. For men, it's about confidence, comfort, and connection. When styling male patients, use nostalgia as your hook, "Your dad wore it first" always gets a smile.

Merch it up with vintage-style displays or framed family photos that tell a story. Blend those sentimental cues with modern materials, sleeker fits, and sharp colour palettes. It's eyewear that feels familiar, but looks completely fresh.

— WENDY BUCHANAN,  
Eyewear Image Expert



5.



6.



7.



8.

# Collision Course

When sport, strength, and sight collide, it's often men who take the hit

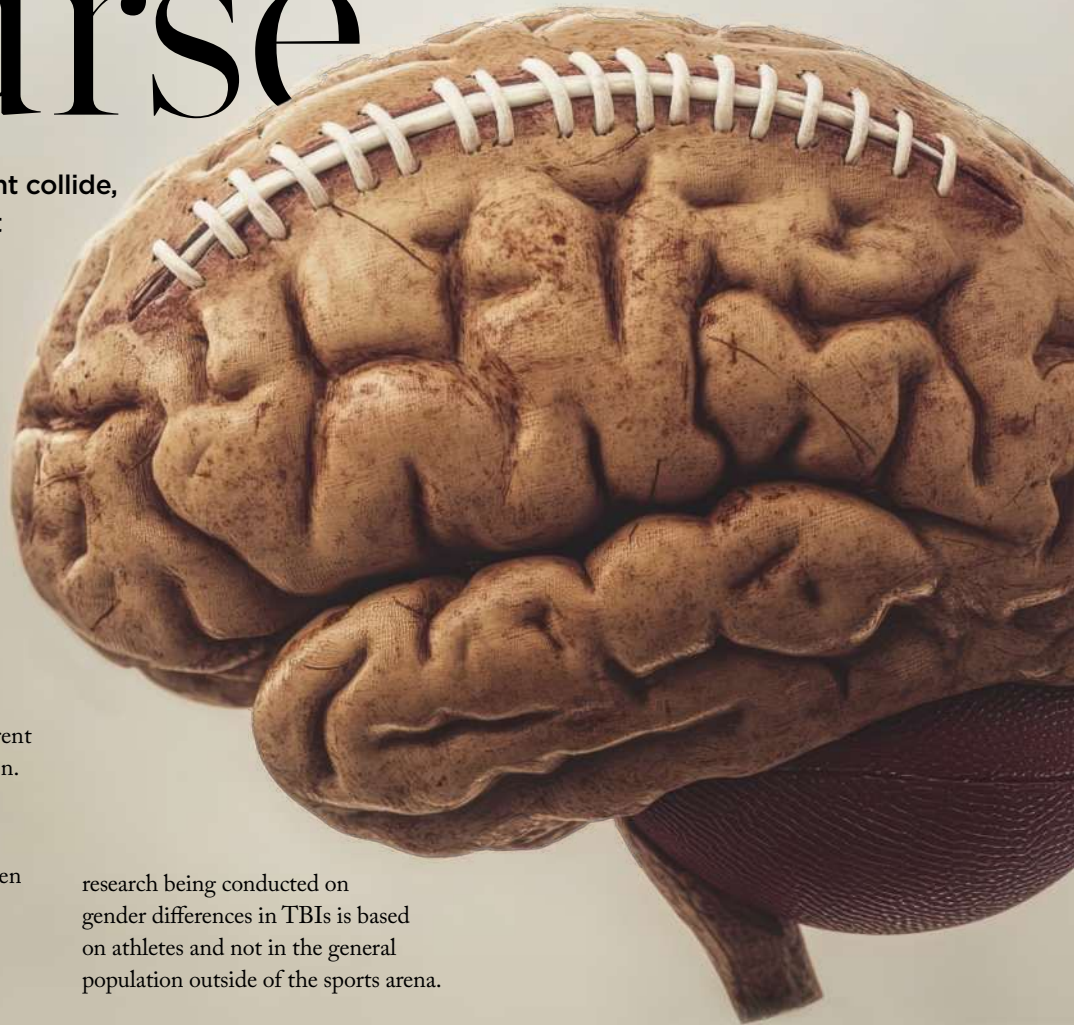
BY EVRA TAYLOR

**F**or people who suffer from a traumatic brain injury, and the ECPs who treat them, the symptoms and management can be varied and challenging, requiring a great deal of patience and, in some cases, long-term effort.

Traumatic brain injury (TBI): The term alone is enough to strike fear in people's hearts. TBIs comprise a number of different types of injury, one of which is concussion.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information, a hub for actionable health data and information, reports that between fiscal years 2018 and 2023, there were 127,460 TBI-related hospitalizations reported in Canada (excluding Quebec). This is an average of approximately 21,200 per year. Among these hospitalizations, 11% of cases were concussions. Sixty-three per cent of cases were in males, and males were the majority of cases across most age groups.

According to research by the Rehabilitation Sciences Institute at the University of Toronto, males in Ontario had higher rates of concussion-related emergency department visits than females in 2015–2017 and again in 2023. Angela Colantonio, PhD, director of the Institute, noted that the bulk of



research being conducted on gender differences in TBIs is based on athletes and not in the general population outside of the sports arena.

## THE OCULAR EFFECTS OF CONCUSSION

While males and females share some concussion-related symptoms in common, there are gender differences in the way they experience concussion, specifically in symptoms, alterations in brain structure and function, and recovery trajectories. However, these disparities haven't been well studied, and experts contend that social gender differences account for some of this.

The most common post-concussion vision problems are blurry or double vision. Blurry vision occurs when the alignment of the eyes diverges when focusing on nearby objects. This can cause poor balance, dizziness or difficulty reading.

One study showed that following concussion, men had a greater sensitivity to noise and more sleep disturbances than women. Men also reported restlessness as a symptom of concussion.



People may also experience diplopia or double vision. This is frequently caused by trauma to the optic nerve, orbital bones or the muscles surrounding the eye. Blurry and double vision are caused by an interruption in eye-brain communication.

Another frequently-reported symptom of concussion is photophobia, which can occur even after mild head trauma. The majority of patients rate their photosensitivity as severe.

Other symptoms include vision loss, eye pain, impaired eye movements, and vertigo.

## SUPPORTING YOUR PATIENTS WITH CONCUSSION

The ocular effects of concussion may last for up to a year or more, requiring post-concussion physiotherapy or other types of specialized intervention.

It's important for ECPs to conduct a comprehensive eye exam as soon as possible after the injury to determine if there are neurological or other types of more serious deficits that may need rapid intervention by specialists in concussion management. These specialists may include sports medicine practitioners, physiatrists, neurologists, neuropsychologists, ophthalmologists, and otorhinolaryngologists.

Patients should be encouraged to modify their activities of daily living, such as reducing their screen time, using an enlarged font or double spacing when reading, and adjusting devices for brightness. Vision therapy, specialized glasses and patching to resolve double vision are methods that can be used to help manage symptoms.

## VIOLENCE IN SPORTS

The reported higher prevalence in men may be due to their greater participation in “body-blow” sports like football, rugby, ice hockey, and wrestling. It's no secret that violence in sports has been increasing, thereby escalating the likelihood of concussion on the playing field. According to Carolyn Emery, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, it's anticipated that one in 10 Canadians ages 13 to 18 seek medical attention every year for a sport-related concussion. Forty per cent of these

youth have experienced a previous concussion, and 20 per cent will have a variety of persistent symptoms for longer than one month. Emery views concussion as a major public health priority and is active in concussion prevention in youth sport.

Rowan Stringer was an Ottawa-born 17-year-old high school rugby player who suffered multiple concussions in one week in 2013 and died as a result of her injuries. Subsequently, Rowan's Law – Bill 193 – was enacted in 2018 for the improvement of concussion in amateur sports by mandating concussion education, requiring athletes and parents to review resources, and establishing protocols for removal from play and medical clearance before return.

While males and females share some concussion-related symptoms in common, there are gender differences in the way they experience concussion...

## MAKING HEADWAY WITH ADVANCED HEAD GEAR

The standard sports helmet hasn't evolved much since its introduction in the 1960s. A helmet cover known as the Guardian Cap was developed in 2010 as a soft-shell pad that attaches to and covers the outside of a gridiron football or ice hockey helmet as an advanced safety measure to help prevent concussion.

In 2024, the Canadian Football League (CFL) introduced several new initiatives and enhanced existing practices to support its players' health and safety. These include expanded uses of Guardian Caps; however, their use is optional. The CFL claims that in 2023, the introduction of Guardian Caps and other protective measures led to a 42 per cent decrease in training concussions. Dr. Charles Tator and Dr. Carmela Tartaglia — leadership members of the University Health Network's Canadian Concussion Centre, a team of world leaders in brain injuries, imaging, genetics, clinical care, neuropsychology and psychiatry — both said they haven't seen enough data to convince them that the soft-shell cap can protect against concussions. While physicians

and brain injury experts encourage the use of Guardian Caps, they say their use doesn't reduce the risk of concussion. Health Canada asserts that while helmets and related head gear can't prevent concussion, they can reduce its severity. Helmets may absorb very high impact, but they can't control the brain's acceleration and deceleration — the rapid movement inside the skull which leads to a concussion.

The League added mandatory mouthguards to its efforts to decrease the incidence of concussion, making it the first professional sports league in North America to mandate usage. Also in 2024, the CFL introduced a new injury spotter assistant position in their league

command centre to oversee video and communication technologies.

The 2024 CFL season recorded its lowest number of concussions since 2015, showing a 21 per cent decrease from 2023 to 2024, and a 50 per cent drop versus 2015.

In 2024, the Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport was published with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The Guideline is intended to ensure that athletes with a suspected concussion receive timely and appropriate care, and proper management to allow them to return to their sport. It is based on a review of the current scientific evidence and expert consensus on best practices for the evaluation and management of athletes in Canada who sustain a concussion during a sport activity.

ECPs can play an important role in helping their patients recovery from concussion through early diagnosis and management. People who have experienced a head trauma should be encouraged to track and monitor any eye- or vision-related symptoms, and to report them to their ECP as quickly as possible, noting that visual impairments left untreated may lead to prolonged recovery. **OP**

# The Minds

## *Behind the Mission*

Meet the duo behind Neuroptek, a Canadian med-tech specializing in neuro-ophthalmic diagnostics.

BY AMANPREET DHAMI



**W**hen neurologists Dr. Neda Anssari, MD FRCPC and Dr. Behzad Mansouri MD PhD FRCPC first met, they shared more than a passion for brain health — they shared a frustration. Both saw patients struggling to access timely care for vision and neurological problems. Appointments were scattered across specialties, and assessments were often delayed by long wait times. For many, symptoms that could have been addressed early simply worsened with time.

That shared experience became the spark for Neuroptek, a Canadian med-tech company redefining how we measure and understand eye-brain health.

Dr. Anssari trained as a neurologist at the University of Manitoba before completing a fellowship at the University of Toronto focused on concussion, post-concussion syndrome, and chronic traumatic encephalopathy. Her work bridges clinical care and research — a dual perspective that's been key to Neuroptek's approach.

Dr. Mansouri, meanwhile, brings an equally dynamic background. A neurologist and neuro-ophthalmologist trained at Harvard Medical School with a PhD in neuroscience from McGill University, he's spent his career studying how the brain and vision systems connect. "My passion lies in innovation—developing tools that make diagnosis more objective, accessible, and scalable," he explains.

Together, their complementary expertise has shaped Neuroptek's mission: to make eye-brain diagnostics faster, smarter, and more accessible for everyone.

### **FROM FRUSTRATION TO INNOVATION:**

#### **THE BIRTH OF EYEMIRAGE**

The idea behind Neuroptek's flagship technology, EyeMirage, began with a deceptively simple question: What if a smartphone could provide reliable, standardized visual testing — anytime, anywhere?

That question led to years of research, testing, and development. The result is a first-of-its-kind system that turns an ordinary smartphone into a portable neuro-ophthalmic assessment tool. Using a lightweight headset designed to control for distance, lighting, and alignment, EyeMirage guides users through automated tests for visual acuity, colour vision, visual fields, and ocular motility.

EyeMirage's ability to measure both visual and neurological function simultaneously bridges a gap that has long existed between two closely linked fields, ophthalmology and neurology. EyeMirage creates an opportunity for longstanding change and positive developments in both fields.

## BRIDGING TWO WORLDS: OPHTHALMOLOGY AND NEUROLOGY

As eyecare professionals one knows that vision is one of the most direct expressions of brain activity, yet the two disciplines of ophthalmology and neurology operate in silos. Neuroptek presents an opportunity to change this by empowering eyecare professionals with a digital tool that complements their expertise, while also increasing access for underserved populations.

EyeMirage's tests — such as self-paced saccades, which measure how the eyes move between targets — are highly relevant in neurology, but not commonly assessed in eye care. Conversely, its visual field testing brings precision and repeatability to a process that, in neurology, is often done using quick, manual “confrontation” tests.

## Using a lightweight headset designed to control for distance, lighting, and alignment, EyeMirage guides users through automated tests for visual acuity, colour vision, visual fields, and ocular motility.

By creating a shared, objective platform, Neuroptek enables both neurologists and eye care professionals to evaluate eye-brain function with a single, standardized tool. This integration allows for better collaboration, faster diagnoses, and more consistent monitoring of conditions like concussion, stroke, glaucoma, amblyopia, macular degeneration, optic neuropathy, and other neurodegenerative diseases.

### FILLING A CRITICAL CLINICAL GAP

Globally, more than a billion people experience some form of vision loss, and nearly half of those cases are preventable. Yet early detection remains one of the biggest challenges in eye care.

That's where EyeMirage steps in. The system provides quick, objective vision



### THE CANADIAN MED-TECH JOURNEY

Building a med-tech company in Canada has been both rewarding and challenging for Neuroptek's founders. Canada's strong research ecosystem and collaborative clinical community have supported their growth, but navigating regulatory pathways and securing early-stage funding have tested the founders' resolve.

Still, the two remain optimistic. “What keeps us motivated is knowing this technology has the potential to close real gaps in care and make eye-brain health more accessible worldwide,” says Dr. Anssari.

Dr. Anssari and Dr. Mansouri's commitment to advancing Canadian innovation also means that EyeMirage will launch first in Canada, before expanding globally. The company is currently working through validation and regulatory milestones, with pilot programs already underway in multiple clinics.

### LOOKING AHEAD: THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL DIAGNOSTICS

For Dr. Mansouri and Dr. Anssari, EyeMirage is just the beginning. Together they envision a future where digital diagnostics become routine — a world where patients can access reliable, data-driven testing regardless of location, and where clinicians can use that data to make faster, more informed decisions.

Their mission is simple but ambitious: Democratize eye-brain health by leveraging the power and ubiquity of smartphones. By combining clinical science with intuitive technology, Neuroptek is paving the way for a new era in healthcare—one where vision truly meets the brain opening up pathways for eyecare professionals and patients alike. **OP**

assessments that can be performed virtually anywhere — from clinics and schools to sports fields and remote communities. Results can then be securely shared with healthcare providers for review and follow-up. These assessments can play a key role in preventing avoidable vision loss via early detection and diagnosis.

While EyeMirage isn't meant to replace a full in-person exam, the technology serves as a powerful screening and triage tool. EyeMirage can also help catch problems earlier and expand access to care — especially in underserved regions. For clinicians, it means faster data collection and better patient tracking; for patients, it means access without barriers. Combined this is an opportunity to better the eye care industry through a synergy of technology, neurology and ophthalmology.

# Full Circle VISION

Providing eyecare in the community I belong

Dr. Simron Gill,  
Optometry Partner  
of Specsavers Centre  
on Barton



**D**r. Simron Gill, optometry partner at Specsavers Centre on Barton, takes us through his journey to partnership, and what it means for him to have a Specsavers optical store and his own clinic in the community he grew up in – East Hamilton, Ontario.

“My career in optometry began in 2009, driven by a deep desire to make a tangible impact on people’s quality of life through health care.

“Before partnering with Specsavers, I spent over a decade working in a variety of optometric environments. From independent primary care clinics to working alongside ophthalmologists across specialties and

within corporate optometry practice, each experience has shaped the way I practise today. Every step in that journey taught me valuable lessons I now bring to my own independent clinic – lessons that help us provide patient-focused care every single day.

“Early in my career, I had the opportunity to gain experience at a Specsavers location in Central London in the U.K. Even then, I recognized the impact of offering quality eyecare and eyewear at accessible prices. I found myself deeply curious, not just about clinical care, but about the business model, supply chain, and the long-term vision behind it all.

“So when I learned Specsavers was coming to Canada, it felt like the perfect fit. Having previously worked in the Specsavers environment, I knew first-hand how effective and supportive it was. The clinical tools, systems and patient-first mindset all

aligned with how I wanted to practise. The partnership model removed many of the traditional challenges of starting a business. The reduced upfront investment, robust back-end support and trusted brand recognition allowed me to focus on delivering excellent care. It’s rare to find a model that blends independence with meaningful infrastructure, but that’s exactly what this partnership has offered.

“I also appreciate the emphasis Specsavers places on equipping clinics with advanced diagnostic technology. Having access to OCT and other tools ensures we, as optometrists, are not just providing routine care – we’re proactively detecting eye diseases early, which improves patient outcomes and reduces strain on the broader health-care system.



## Returning to serve my community felt like a full-circle moment.

“Optometrists are uniquely positioned to play a pivotal role in early detection and prevention. Specsavers’ investment in clinical excellence empowers us to do just that.

“Ultimately, my goal has always been to improve lives through vision, so I’m proud to be part of a brand that shares that mission.

“Opening in East Hamilton has been personally meaningful to me. I grew up in the area, and my grandmother lived here, so returning to serve my community felt like a full-circle moment. To return to where I spent so much of my childhood, and to be part of restoring people’s sight – there’s something very grounding and humbling about that. It’s more than a business. It’s a purpose.” **OP**



**As an optometrist-owned company, we believe expert eyecare and quality eyewear should be affordable to all, and we also believe in the power of communities. That’s why our stores are owned and run by local eyecare experts.**

**Learn more at [specsaverspartnership.ca](https://specsaverspartnership.ca)**



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Specsavers

# Closing the Gap



Safety glasses have come a long way from clunky goggles—and workers are finally wearing them because of it.

BY DAVID GOLDBERG

**A**cross Canada, approximately 200 workplace eye injuries occur every day, with 90 per cent of them preventable through proper eye protection, according to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS). But there's long been a gap between having eye protection available and workers actually wearing it properly. Increasingly, that gap is being closed not through enforcement alone, but through innovation in lens technology and frame design that's finally making safety eyewear workers actually want to wear.

“Industry safety officers often express their frustration of having employees at work who wear safety eyewear bought online and not meeting regulatory standards,” says Al Amarshi, director of vision care programs at the Alberta Association of Optometrists and director of the Eyesafe program.

Ill-fitting frames leave dangerous gaps or provide the wrong protection for specific hazards. The problem worsens with prescription lenses — safety goggles worn over glasses create a poor fit and discomfort, while contact lenses under goggles increase corneal injury risk.

Then there's using the wrong type of safety glasses altogether. "In dusty environments, we rarely see safety eyewear with seals that meet dust protection standards," says Amarshi. "Likewise, in laboratories, it's common to have employees wearing safety eyewear that is not rated for chemical splashes."

"Employers must assess workplace hazards and the specific tasks being completed, in order to provide appropriate eye and face protection to workers," says Ashley Gregerson, advisor for government and media relations at WorkSafeBC. "Personal protective equipment is a worker's last line of defense against injury or death when workplace hazards cannot be eliminated."

### Advances in safety lens technology

The game changed several years ago when Amarshi and the Eyesafe team advocated for a critical update to CSA standards, pushing for anti-fog to be included as an approved coating. "We sat at CSA meetings — we're on the CSA committee — and had the University of Waterloo through their optometry program test anti-fog coating to make sure it continued to meet the impact standards. And it did," says Amarshi.

The approval enabled innovations like Essilor's Opti-Fog coating, which uses anti-fog molecules activated by a specially treated cloth. Instead of forming fog, water droplets spread uniformly across the lens surface, keeping vision clear — critical for oil sands, mining, and other variable-weather worksites.

Material science brought another breakthrough with highly impact-resistant lens materials like Trivex and polycarbonate. These materials provide exceptional protection against impact-related incidents common in construction and high-risk industries, while offering excellent optical clarity and built-in UV protection.

Close-fit wrap-style frames sit closer to the face and curve around for enhanced peripheral protection — key for comprehensive coverage from flying debris. The wraparound design eliminates gaps while maintaining wide field of vision, and workers can now choose from varied styles that balance protection, comfort, and specific hazards.

# Safety meets STYLE

Today's safety eyewear is built to protect—and built to be worn.



#### ArmourRx 7000 Series

Canadian-made, prescription-ready, and fully CSA Z94.3-certified. Multiple sizes and removable side shields make this a clinic essential for proper workplace fit.



#### Wiley X Gravity

Tough, dual-rated (ANSI Z87.1 / CSA Z94.3) and built for life on and off the job. A removable foam gasket seals out dust — ideal for construction and outdoor trades.



#### SecuroVision Element 2.0

Lightweight, wrap-style comfort with anti-fog lens options and all-day wearability. Designed within Canada's trusted SecuroVision program for maximum compliance and clarity.

**Disclaimer:** Certification may vary by model or lens type. Always verify CSA Z94.3 or equivalent safety markings and fit before dispensing. Optical Prism assumes no liability for product use or certification claims.

## Getting the fit right

Amarshi's team now trains optometrists to check the critical 6-8 mm gap using a simple tool — essentially a stick with measurements on each side. "We're providing this tool that they use at the clinic to check that fit. They place the stick between the face and the glasses to ensure they're checking that gap to provide the best protection for employees."

The fit revolution extends beyond gap measurements. "The notion of 'one size fits all' does not work for safety eyewear," Amarshi says. "Over the past four to five years, I have seen a substantial increase in the number of options for sizes, colours and shapes of safety eyewear. This has allowed us to find properly fitting eyewear, thereby reducing the chances of injury and at the same time, increasing comfort."

## It's a lifestyle thing

Perhaps the most surprising shift has been cultural. Men are increasingly seeking safety glasses versatile enough for both work shifts and weekend activities like motorcycle riding or home projects — reflecting how workers now view safety glasses as functional lifestyle gear rather than mandatory equipment.

Five years ago, most companies banned workers from wearing company-provided safety glasses off-site. "They've changed their tune," notes Amarshi. "And we've promoted that because the more they wear their safety glasses, the more they're going to wear them at work."

“In dusty environments, we rarely see safety eyewear with seals that meet dust protection standards...Likewise, in laboratories, it's common to have employees wearing safety eyewear that is not rated for chemical splashes.”

- AL AMARSHI, Director of vision care programs at the Alberta Association of Optometrists and director of the Eyesafe program



"In Canada, we have a shared responsibility for occupational health and safety that we call the internal responsibility system," says Shazard Bansraj, occupational health and safety specialist at CCOHS. "The employer and the workers are responsible for health and safety."

Resources continue expanding. CCOHS offers free fact sheets, posters, and online PPE courses and hazard assessment training. Their Safety Info Line connects Canadians to specialists at no cost.

"While eliminating hazards is always the first priority, when safety eyewear is

necessary, it's important to choose the right protection for the specific tasks and worksites involved and ensure that it fits properly," says Gregerson at WorkSafeBC. The organization's enforcement reflects an education-first approach — between 2020 and 2024, they issued nearly 483 orders for eye protection violations, but handed down just 17 penalties.

The message is clear: with proper standards, innovative technology, correct fitting, and shared responsibility, those 200 daily Canadian eye injuries can become increasingly rare. The eyewear exists. Now it's just a matter of closing the gap. **OP**

# Choosing the RIGHT Protection

**Not all safety glasses are created equal. Canada's CSA Z94.3:20 standard breaks eye protection into seven classes depending on what hazards you're facing.**

### MOST COMMON TYPES:

**Class 1A** - Basic safety glasses with side shields. This is what most construction and manufacturing workers wear for impact protection.

**Class 2B** - Safety goggles that protect against dust, chemicals, and flying debris. The go-to for lab work.

**Class 3** - Specialized welding helmet protection.

The fit matters—a lot. Here's something most companies don't know: there's supposed to be no more than a 6-8 mm gap between your face and the frame.

"A one millimetre gap can have a devastating result if an employee is faced with an injury," says Al Amarshi from the Eyesafe program.

**Bottom line:** Match your eyewear to your hazards, and make sure it fits properly. When in doubt, talk to a safety professional or optometrist trained in workplace eye protection.





# Detect to Protect

Proactive diabetes care so patients aren't left in the dark

BY DR. ALLISON SCOTT, CAO PRESIDENT

In Canada, about 3.7 million people live with diagnosed diabetes. One of the most significant but often overlooked complications of diabetes is its impact on vision. Diabetes primarily affects vision through prolonged hyperglycemia, which damages blood vessels in the retina, leading to diabetic retinopathy. It is a leading cause of vision loss both world-wide and in Canada. Diabetes Awareness Month is an important opportunity to highlight the connection between diabetes and vision loss.

As optometrists, we are on the front lines of preserving vision. Diabetic retinopathy is often asymptomatic in its early stages, making it a silent yet progressive threat to eye health. By the time vision changes occur, the disease may already be advanced, and treatment options may become more extensive and possibly limited. For this reason, early detection through comprehensive eye examinations is essential. Optometrists can detect subtle retinal changes before they affect someone's sight, creating an opportunity for timely intervention.

Unfortunately, many Canadians with diabetes are unaware of the importance of a comprehensive eye exam and delay their care for a variety of reasons — from busy schedules to simply not realizing the risks. Annual comprehensive eye exams are crucial, as they can mean the difference between maintaining clear, healthy vision or facing potentially irreversible sight loss.

**Diabetic retinopathy is often asymptomatic in its early stages, making it a silent yet progressive threat to eye health.**

Early intervention through regular eye examinations can play an important role in detecting not only diabetic retinopathy, but diabetes itself. Studies show ocular manifestations are already present in a significant portion of patients at the time of diagnosis. Fluctuating vision, loss of accommoda-

tion and sudden diplopia are among the non-retinal complications that can raise suspicion of diabetes in otherwise asymptomatic individuals. When these changes are noticed early, it can lead to prompt referrals for further medical evaluation and diagnosis, highlighting the vital role optometry plays in systemic health monitoring.

**Increasing public awareness is a vital pillar in a preventive approach. Timely diagnosis of diabetes is essential to minimizing the risk of complications.**

The Canadian Association of Optometrists recommends comprehensive eye exams for children starting at six to nine months, again between the ages of two and five, then annually until age 19, once every two years for healthy adults aged 20 to 64, and annually for those aged 65 or older.

Increasing public awareness is a vital pillar in a preventive approach. Timely diagnosis of diabetes is essential to minimizing the risk of complications. Beyond those already diagnosed, awareness efforts should also target at-risk populations. Encouraging preventive care empowers patients to take control of their health before complications arise.

As the prevalence of diabetes continues to rise in Canada, the urgency of addressing its ocular complications becomes even greater. By integrating comprehensive eye exams into routine health care, and strengthening public education, we can ensure Canadians with diabetes preserve their sight, independence and quality of life. **OP**

**Dr Allison Scott is the President of the Canadian Association of Optometrists (CAO). The CAO is the national voice of optometry, providing leadership and support to more than 8,400 members (optometrists, students and optometric assistants) to enhance the delivery of healthy eyes and clear vision for all Canadians.**



# From functional to PHENOMENAL

How One Man's Eyewear Journey Became His Power Brand

BY WENDY BUCHANAN

**G**lasses don't make the man. The right glasses reveal him. What began as a simple request, "just help me pick something decent," evolved into a 14-year style journey that built a personal brand so distinctive people now recognize him by his eyewear before he even speaks. I've had the privilege of guiding that evolution, frame by frame.

This isn't a story about glasses.

It's about my client Glenn, his confidence, leadership, identity, and the power of having a stylist who sees potential and dares to bring it out.

## Where Glenn Started: Playing It Safe

When we first met, Glenn thought he was being "fashion-forward." In reality, his eyewear

was polite — metal frames in copper, silver and bronze, slightly different from his peers but still safe, with just a hint of funkiness hidden on the temple arms. "I always wanted to be a little different," he told me, "but I also didn't want to stand out too much."

Sound familiar? Most male clients start right here, cautiously testing the waters between conformity and individuality. And this is where we, as image-savvy ECPs, get to lead.

I saw his confidence, charisma and A-type energy. His eyewear was underselling him, so I pushed him to see what was possible.

## The First Big Shift: The "This Is Me" Moment

One pair changed everything. It was bigger, bolder and unapologetically colourful, no more hiding it on the arms.

He put them on and said, "Oh. This feels like... me."

That moment wasn't just about a frame. It was about alignment between who he was inside and how the world saw him on the outside. That's the magic moment we should all strive to create for our clients.

## Why the Shift Happened: Leadership Demands Presence

As Glenn's corporate career grew, so did his confidence. Senior roles. Leading teams. Presenting in boardrooms. His internal and external influences had to align.

"If people are looking at my face while I speak," he said, "my eyewear better reflect the confidence they expect from me."

Hair, clothes, grooming and eyewear all had to match the level of leadership he was stepping into. And we made sure they did.

## The Evolution: From Subtle to Show-Stopping

Over the years, I didn't just sell Glenn glasses. I styled his brand and evolved his identity with him. We moved from conservative metal to rich acetates, bold shapes, vibrant colours and frames with presence.

Now, he rotates between three frames on the "funky scale": seven, eight and ten.

Why three? As he says, “Sometimes I blend in. Sometimes I own the room. My glasses decide.”

That’s advanced style intelligence, and he learned it through our work together.

### Confidence Didn’t Come from Eyewear, It Was Unlocked by It

Glenn once told me, “My eyewear didn’t give me confidence. It finally caught up to the confidence I already had.”

That’s what great styling does. It doesn’t change a person, it reveals them. When the outside matches the inside, people walk differently. They lead differently. They influence differently.

### Eyewear as Conversation Starter

At conferences and networking events, strangers constantly approach him: “I love your glasses. Where did you get them?” That one compliment becomes the perfect icebreaker. Within seconds, he’s in a business conversation naturally. And guess what? He’s talking about his eyewear stylist.

No awkward pitch. No rehearsed elevator script. Just presence, personality and connection. That’s the power of strategic eyewear.

### From Corporate Leader to Entrepreneur

Recently, Glenn became a fractional CMO and launched Stratagem Marketing Consulting. New clients. New rooms. New visibility.

“First impressions are everything,” he said. “My eyewear does half the talking before I even open my mouth.”

Because we built a clear personal brand, his eyewear has become his trademark, his differentiator, and his silent advantage. People now expect him to show up in incredible frames, and if he didn’t, they’d be disappointed. Imagine being so consistently styled that great eyewear becomes part of your identity. That didn’t happen by accident. It was intentional, the result of a long-term styling partnership.

### Why This Matters for ECPs

Most men will never ask for bold eyewear. But deep down, they want it. They want presence, individuality, confidence and compliments.



They’ll only explore it if we lead them. Dispensers sell frames. Stylists build brands.

### Glenn’s Advice to Other Men (and Proof We’re on the Right Track)

“Find a professional eyewear consultant. Someone who understands people, personality and style. Develop trust. Let them push you. Be open. Ask yourself, what do I really want my eyewear to do for me?”

### The Lesson: Styling Isn’t Cosmetic, It’s Transformational

This journey with Glenn wasn’t one appointment. It was 14 years of evolution, trust and getting comfortable with being uncomfortable. Every optical professional has clients like him, waiting to be led.

So, here’s the question: are you selling glasses, or are you shaping identity?

Eyewear was never the hero of this story. The client was. But with the right guidance, his frames finally reflected the leader, creator and personality he always was inside. That’s the power we hold as eye care professionals.

When you become the stylist who sees their identity and curates their image, you stop being just another optical and become unforgettable.

This is where loyalty is built. This is where brands are born. And this is where the future of our industry lives. Are you ready to lead it? **OP**

**Wendy Buchanan is an award-winning Optician, TV Eyewear Stylist, and creator of the Be Spectacular™ Sales Styling System.**

# The Independent Advantage

Why Personalized Eyecare Is Winning in 2026



In an era of corporate consolidation, digital disruption and increasingly transactional health care, one thing is clear: patients still value personal connection, trust and expertise, and that's where independent optical practices shine.

Across Canada, independent eyecare is thriving by offering something big-box retailers and online giants cannot replicate — a truly personalized patient experience. From tailored eyewear recommendations to long-term care relationships, independents are redefining what modern eyecare looks like — and patients are noticing.

## Personalized Eyecare Is More Than a Trend — It's the Future

Today's patients want more than convenience. They want to be seen, heard and understood — especially when it comes to something as personal as vision.

They want frames that suit not just their face, but their lifestyle.

They want continuity in care, not a revolving door of providers.

They want professional expertise they can trust over algorithms and upsells.

Independent practices are perfectly positioned to deliver on all fronts. But staying competitive requires more than great service,

it requires access to the right products, pricing, technology and support to remain profitable in a fast-changing marketplace.

That's where The Optical Group comes in.

## Powering Independent Success Since 1988

At The Optical Group (TOG), we've built our business around one core belief: independent eyecare professionals deserve to thrive — not just survive.

As one of Canada's leading optical buying groups, TOG supports more than 700 optical practices nationwide by giving them access to exclusive vendor pricing and rebates on top eyewear and lens brands, and by providing:

- Centralized billing that simplifies accounting and frees up administrative time.
- Business growth tools, marketing resources and professional development.
- Personalized support from a team that understands your goals.

"Being independent doesn't mean doing it alone," says Ruth Priebe, director of operations at The Optical Group. "Our role is to support independents so they can focus on what they do best — providing personalized, high-quality patient care."

## What Personalized Eyecare Looks Like in 2026

With shifting demographics, AI-enhanced tools and growing consumer awareness, personalized eyecare in 2026 means more than friendly service — it means:

- Offering advanced clinical care tailored to patient lifestyles.
- Curating frame boards that reflect local tastes and individual expression.
- Leveraging data to understand patient needs and buying habits.
- Aligning with values like sustainability and community support.

Independent practices that lean into these strengths, and back them with smart business systems, aren't just competing with the big players; they're leading the future of eyecare.

## The TOG Difference: Supporting the Independent Advantage

As the landscape continues to evolve, The Optical Group is evolving too. We're expanding our vendor network, enhancing resources and investing in tools that support everything from digital marketing to staff training — because your success is our mission.

Whether you're a long-established clinic or a new practitioner just starting out, TOG helps you scale your strengths, reduce costs and stay focused on your patients — not paperwork.

## Ready to Strengthen Your Independent Advantage?

Join The Optical Group today and discover how Canadian optical professionals are building stronger, more profitable practices, without sacrificing what makes them unique. **OP**

To learn how The Optical Group supports more than 700 independent practices across Canada, visit [opticalgroupcanada.com](https://opticalgroupcanada.com)



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# Go Live, Gain Patients

## How to host a virtual open house for your practice

BY ASHLEY PFEIFER

**V**irtual open houses have become a powerful tool for eye care practices to connect with patients, showcase services and highlight team expertise without geographical limitations or mobility barriers. These events are cost-effective, convenient and offer a unique opportunity to strengthen patient relationships and increase community visibility.

A survey found that 38 per cent of 1,800 patients expressed a preference for virtual modalities — such as phone, email, video

or text — as their first point of contact, especially when those options are accessible and well supported. This underscores the growing appetite for digital interactions in health-care settings.

Hosting a successful virtual open house, however, requires thoughtful planning, the right technology and strategic promotion.

### Define the goals and audience

Start by identifying your objective: Is it to introduce new technology, highlight recent hires, celebrate a milestone or improve patient engagement? Defining the audience — new patients, loyal clients or referring professionals — will help shape the content and promotion.

Set measurable goals, like a target number of RSVPs or appointments booked, to guide planning and evaluate success.

### Choose the right platform

Platform selection plays a crucial role in delivering a smooth experience. Options such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet are familiar to many users and offer interactive features like screen sharing,

breakout rooms and live Q&A. Ensure the chosen platform can accommodate the expected number of attendees, and always conduct a test run to address potential technical issues.

Consider accessibility and user-friendliness for all patients, including those who may not be tech-savvy.

**A survey found that 38% of 1,800 patients expressed a preference for virtual modalities — such as phone, email, video or text — as their first point of contact...**

Keep privacy and compliance in mind. Even in informal virtual settings, patient trust and privacy matter. While virtual open houses typically don't involve sharing personal health information, it's still wise to follow basic privacy and PIPEDA guidelines.

Avoid discussing individual cases or patient data during the session. If attendees ask personal health questions, encourage them to follow up privately via secure channels. Make sure the platform you use is secure and does not record the session without proper consent. Remind your team not to share patient names, photos or identifying information unless written consent has been obtained in advance.

Start the event with a brief privacy disclaimer to clarify expectations.

### Plan engaging content

A virtual event must offer value to attract and retain attention. Content should be informative, concise and aligned with the event's goals. Popular formats include:

**Live practice tours:** Show off your space and safety protocols.

**Interactive demos:** Highlight new technology or frame collections.

**Meet-the-team segments:** Introduce staff, especially new faces.

**Live Q&A:** Build trust by answering real-time questions.

Incorporate slides, short videos or visuals to maintain engagement. Allow time for interaction to replicate the social feel of in-person events.

**Promote the event effectively**

A successful open house depends heavily on promotion. Begin marketing efforts at least three weeks in advance. Use email newsletters, practice websites and social media platforms to create awareness. Posters or handouts can be distributed in the clinic to inform existing patients.

Collaborate with local schools, businesses or referring providers to broaden your reach. Incentives, like prize draws or limited-time discounts, can boost attendance.

Be sure to include all key details: date, time, registration link and an overview of what to expect. Clear communication will reduce uncertainty and improve turnout.

**Prepare the team**

Everyone involved should be familiar with their role and the event agenda. Allocate specific responsibilities, such as moderating the chat, presenting content or managing technical issues. Rehearsals can help identify any weaknesses and allow staff to practise speaking on camera comfortably.

Professional attire, well-lit spaces and branded backgrounds can elevate the visual presentation and reflect positively on the practice.

**Follow up and measure success**

Post-event communication is essential. Send thank-you emails with a recap, answers to unanswered questions and a link to schedule appointments. Collecting feedback via surveys provides valuable insights for future events and highlights areas for improvement.

Metrics such as attendance, engagement and post-event bookings can be used to evaluate success. These insights will inform planning for future virtual events or in-person gatherings.

**Embracing a digital future**

Virtual open houses offer a flexible, inclusive and forward-thinking way for eye care professionals to connect with patients, promote services and differentiate their practice in a competitive market. Whether reaching busy families, patients in rural areas or those with mobility or transportation challenges, these events break down physical and logistical barriers, creating a welcoming space for all.

By leveraging digital tools and thoughtful planning, clinics can deliver a memorable experience that builds loyalty and drives growth. **OP**

**Ashley Pfeifer is an editor at Marketing4ECPs with over six years of optical experience and a bachelor's degree in Digital Media and Journalism. Her passion for storytelling drives her to improve content quality and write narratives that resonate with the audience. Ashley can be reached at marketing4ecps.com.**

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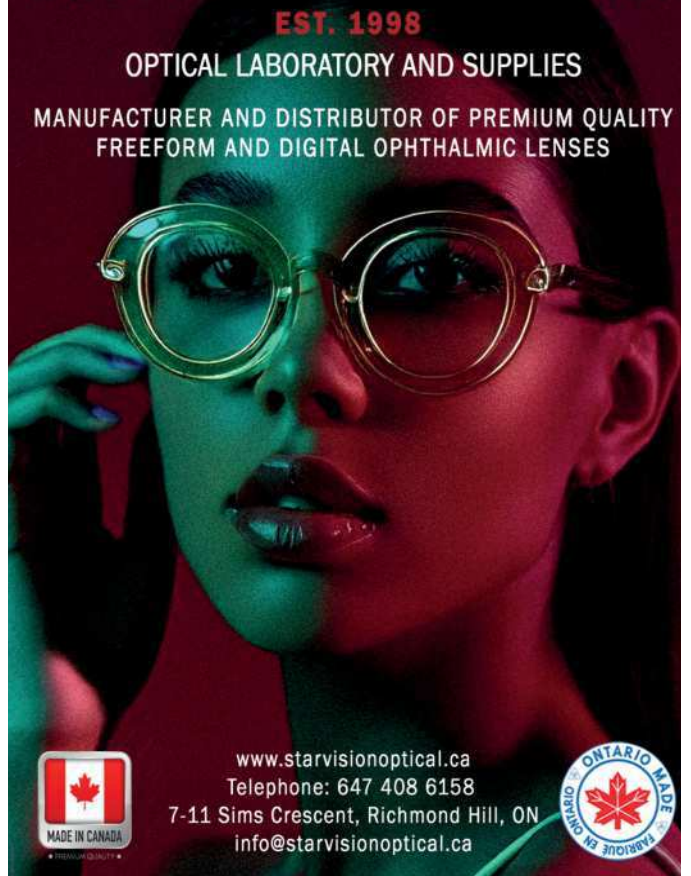
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# Crack the Dividend Code

Unlocking the hidden benefits of eligible dividends for business owners.

BY TIM PAZIUK

In our last chat, I mentioned investing in Royal Bank common shares. Today, let's look at why Canadian dividends, especially the eligible kind, are such powerful tools for building wealth.

## WHAT MAKES DIVIDENDS SO APPEALING?

Dividends, much like real estate, offer two big benefits: steady income and the potential for growth. But unlike rental income, eligible dividends enjoy special tax treatment—and that's where the real advantage lies. Under Canada's Income Tax Act, there are two types of dividends: eligible and non-eligible. The difference between them can make a big impact on your tax bill.

## A QUICK EXAMPLE

Imagine you run a business in Ontario and need \$125,000 a year to live comfort-

ably. Your business earns \$50,000 in profit. If you leave that money in the company, it's taxed at the small business rate, about 12.2 per cent. But if you withdraw \$30,000 as a non-eligible dividend, your personal tax rate jumps to roughly 36.1 per cent. Why? Because you already paid lower corporate tax, the personal rate increases to balance things out. Now, let's change the scenario. Suppose your company earns \$30,000 in dividends from Royal Bank shares. Since Royal Bank pays corporate tax at the general rate of 28 per cent, those dividends are eligible. If you take that \$30,000 personally, your tax rate drops to about 25.38 per cent, and your company pays no extra tax.

## NOT ALL INCOME IS EQUAL

Different types of income are taxed in different ways. Interest, royalties, foreign dividends and rental income are taxed most heavily. Capital gains are taxed the least. Eligible dividends sit in the middle but come with major planning benefits.

Let's look at three quick comparisons, assuming you live in Ontario and draw a \$150,000 salary from your business.

### 1. Interest, Foreign Dividends or Rental Income (\$10,000)

**Corporate tax:** \$5,000  
with \$3,000 credited to a non-eligible refundable dividend tax on hand (NERDTH)  
**Personal tax:** \$3,789  
**Total tax:** \$5,789

### 2. Capital Gains (\$10,000)

**Corporate tax:** \$2,500  
with \$1,500 credited to NERDTH  
You take \$5,000 tax-free and \$5,000 as a non-eligible dividend.  
**Personal tax:** \$1,894  
**Total tax:** \$2,894

### 3. Eligible Dividends (\$10,000)

**Corporate tax:** \$3,833  
credited to an eligible refundable dividend tax on hand (ERDTH)  
Company gets a full refund, and personal tax is \$2,753.  
**Total tax:** \$2,753

Clearly, eligible dividends come out ahead.

## WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER

The hardest money to earn is the money you have to work for. Setting up a tax-smart income stream lets your money do the heavy lifting—and helps you focus on long-term growth instead of short-term market swings.

## PLAN WITH PURPOSE

If your corporation invests in mutual funds or ETFs, tax planning becomes tricky. You won't know what kind of income you've earned until after Dec. 31, which leaves no time to plan. That often means paying more tax than necessary.

With individual stocks, you know exactly what dividends to expect and when to trigger capital gains. That gives you flexibility, and flexibility equals opportunity.

## DON'T LEAVE IT TO CHANCE

Pooled investments like mutual funds and ETFs may seem easy, but their returns and tax consequences are unpredictable. If you want a more efficient, strategic, and rewarding portfolio inside your company, eligible dividends might just be your smartest move yet. **OP**

Tim Paziuk has been in the financial services industry for over 45 years. He is the author of two books on the incorporation of professionals and has been featured in the *Financial Post*, *Huffington Post*, *MoneySense* magazine, and numerous other publications. He is currently the Chairman of TPC Financial Group Limited, a fee-for-service financial planning firm specializing in professionals.





# Talk is Cheap. Listening Pays

Listening more and educating less could be your best clinical strategy yet.

BY NANCY DEWALD

**W**hether it's in the exam room or the dispensary, more education doesn't always mean better outcomes. We know the exam process and eyewear purchase can be overwhelming to consumers. So how do we overcome this? It's simple: educate less, listen more.

Listening more and educating strategically, rather than exhaustively, can lead to:

- Higher prescription acceptance
- Better patient satisfaction
- More efficient use of exam time
- Stronger long-term relationships

## Listen More. Talk Less.

Common complaints in optometry include feeling rushed or unheard — both of which erode trust and reduce follow-through.

As the expert, it's tempting to jump into recommendations before the patient finishes sharing their concerns. Research shows that doctors often interrupt patients early and begin prescribing solutions prematurely. In fact, three-quarters of all physicians interrupt patients before they finish voicing their concerns. I'm sure it's less in optometry, but it's certainly still a reality.

It's critical to listen to understand—not just to respond. When you gather the full story, the right solution becomes obvious to both you and the patient.

## Ask and Then Listen

It's not just polite, active listening improves adherence. Motivational interviewing (MI), which emphasizes listening and guiding, has been shown to increase treatment compliance and behaviour change across health conditions.

Imagine the return on investment by making this one simple change in your business—boosting patient compliance, results and purchases.

Don't assume what matters to the patient—discover it. We often talk patients out of a sale by listing features, which can make them feel “sold to” rather than understood. Switch things up: use open-ended questions to gather information quickly and efficiently. Then, start by addressing the problem that is most important to them.

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

- What is bothering you most about your vision?
- AWE: And what else?
- What things are you struggling to do because of your vision?
- What do you want your eyewear to say about you?

These questions shift the focus from product features to personal impact. That's where real value for the patient lives. As humans, 95 per cent of our decisions are driven by emotion — not logic.

## Forget the Jargon

Eye care professionals are fluent in clinical language — but patients aren't. And when patients feel confused, they're less likely to act.

### SIMPLIFY YOUR LANGUAGE:

- Use analogies
- Tell stories
- Use social proofing
- Avoid industry jargon

If you want them to retain your recommendation, it can't be buried in complexity.

Educating less doesn't mean caring less, it means communicating smarter. When you listen deeply, speak simply, and guide strategically, patients feel heard, understood and empowered to make the right choices.

Thanks for listening. **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. In addition to her work at Lead Up, Nancy also serves as a consultant with Cleinman Performance Partners. To find out more, visit [leaduptrainingandconsulting.ca](http://leaduptrainingandconsulting.ca)**

# Beyond *the* Frame

A selection of stylish, unique, and innovative eyewear products that have caught our eye this month.

## 1. CONTACT LENS POUCH

Finally, a cute pouch that gets you. This vibrant, zipper-secure travel bag keeps contact lens essentials safe, stylish, and wrinkle-free. With a T-bottom for extra room and crisp printing that pops, it's perfect for optical pros, jet-setters, and anyone who's ever fished a lens case from a gym bag.

[etsy.com/ca/listing/1892461379/contact-lens-travel-pouch-compact](https://www.etsy.com/ca/listing/1892461379/contact-lens-travel-pouch-compact)

## 2. MOSCOT COFFEE TABLE BOOK

More than just a pretty cover, this MOSCOT x Assouline coffee table book is 304 pages of eyewear envy, family lore, and NYC swagger. Stock it in your office, gift it to your coolest client, or just flex it on your shelf—because 110 years of style deserves a spotlight. [moscotique.com/product/coffee-table-book/](https://www.moscotique.com/product/coffee-table-book/)

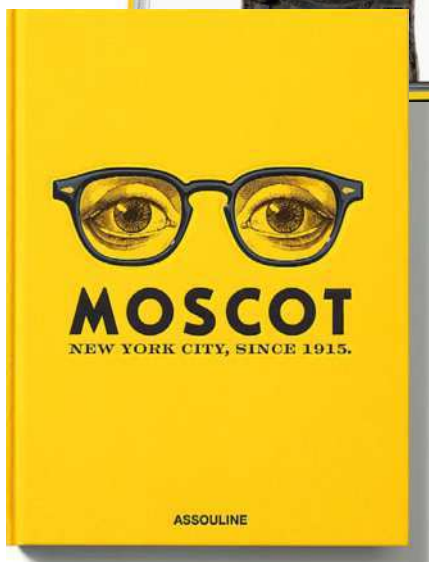
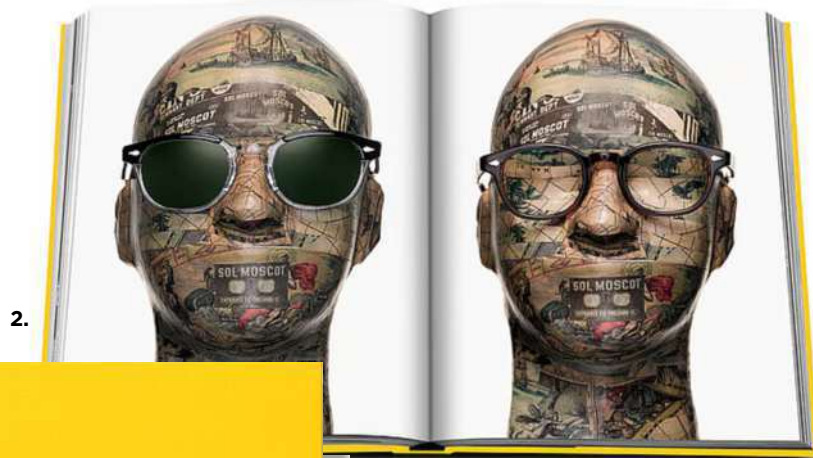
## 3. THE DRY EYE DRINK

Finally—hydration with a purpose! The Dry Eye Drink is the optometrist-approved way for patients to sip their way to ocular comfort. Packed with electrolytes, DHA, and turmeric (minus the sugar), this berry-flavoured boost fights inflammation, dryness, and dehydration—keeping eyes refreshed, comfortable, and camera-ready all day long.

[hilcovision.com/f/dry-eye-drink](https://www.hilcovision.com/f/dry-eye-drink)

## 4. EVIL EYE TOTE BAG

Keep bad vibes at bay—in serious style. This PU leather Evil Eye tote is roomy, lined, and ready for anything from clinic runs to weekend getaways. With inside pockets, a sleek zip closure, and protective charm appeal, it's the ultimate good-energy carryall for optical pros on the move. [etsy.com/ca/listing/1784430351/evil-eye-tote-bag-pu-leather-shoppe](https://www.etsy.com/ca/listing/1784430351/evil-eye-tote-bag-pu-leather-shoppe)





# Beyond Burnout

Addressing Burnout and Fostering Wellness in Canadian Optical Practices

BY ROBERT DALTON

**T**he role of a licensed optician is intrinsically tied to customer service and technical precision — a demanding combination that requires constant focus, empathy and emotional labour. For too long, the optical profession has focused on clinical outcomes while overlooking a silent epidemic affecting its most valuable asset: its people.

Across the Canadian eye care sector, burnout is high, driven by relentless patient volumes, the pressure to meet both clinical and retail demands, and the emotional toll of dealing with difficult patients. This isn't just an HR issue, it's a patient-care and retention crisis. Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism and a reduced sense of accomplishment, is the primary driver of staff turnover. For practice owners and managers, prioritizing staff wellness must now move from a nice-to-have perk to a strategic necessity.

## THE THREE PILLARS OF SYSTEMIC WELLNESS

To genuinely address this issue, optical practices must shift their focus from surface-level morale boosters to structural changes that reduce daily stress. True wellness rests on three fundamental pillars: workflow optimization, psychological safety and professional value.

### 1. Optimizing Workflow to Reduce Cognitive Load

Many staff members — from front-desk receptionists to dispensing opticians — feel overwhelmed by inefficient systems. The constant juggling of tasks such as answering phones, verifying insurance, updating EHRs and dispensing creates cognitive friction.

#### Actionable strategies:

Automate administrative tasks: Invest in software that handles appointment reminders, patient recall and preliminary insurance checks. This frees opticians to focus on the high-value, patient-facing tasks they're trained for.

#### Establish clear handoffs:

Define a standardized, documented process for patient flow. For example, ensure the front desk handles only check-in, the technician handles pre-testing, and the optician focuses on dispensing. Clarity reduces the anxiety of multitasking.

**Protect break time:** Instill a “no desk lunch” culture. Practice managers should actively encourage staff to take real, unplugged breaks away from the floor.

### 2. Cultivating Psychological Safety and Support

An optician's day is often dominated by emotional labour, especially when managing patients frustrated by wait times, costs or complex prescriptions. Creating a supportive culture is essential for mitigating this stress.

#### Actionable strategies:

Zero-tolerance policy for patient abuse: Empower staff to set boundaries. Ensure your team knows management will immediately back them up if a patient becomes abusive, hostile or discriminatory. The safety of the team must always supersede one difficult customer.

#### Prioritize solution-based

**feedback:** Move away from punitive reviews. When a mistake occurs, ask “What system failed you?” not “What did you do wrong?” This frames challenges as system issues to be fixed collaboratively, rather than personal failures — a shift that radically improves morale.

#### Provide mental-health benefits:

Review your employee benefits plan. Ensure it offers adequate coverage for mental-health

services such as counselling or an employee assistance program (EAP). This is a vital resource for staff dealing with chronic stress or personal challenges.

### 3. Enhancing Professional Value and Growth

Opticians who feel stuck or undervalued are the first to look for new opportunities. Retention is strongest when employees see a future with the practice.

**Actionable strategies:** Invest in specialized training: Fund or provide time off for continuing education (CE), particularly in high-growth areas such as myopia management or advanced contact-lens fitting. This boosts professional confidence and raises the optician's perceived value to the practice.

#### Create clear advancement

**paths:** Implement a structured, tiered system (for example: junior optician, senior optician, lead dispenser) with corresponding increases in responsibility, salary and title. A visible path forward is a powerful antidote to career stagnation.

#### Recognize and reward:

Beyond salary, offer regular public appreciation for exceptional patient feedback or team support. Acknowledging great work is a foundational component of helping staff feel seen and valued.

For Canadian optical practices, a healthy workplace is the ultimate competitive advantage. By focusing on systemic support over superficial fixes, we not only invest in our teams but also ensure the highest quality of patient care for the long term. **OP**

**Robert Dalton is the executive director of the Opticians Association of Canada, whose 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](http://opticians.ca).**

# Convert with Care

Smart optical solutions that delight patients—and drive profit.

BY DR. FALLON PATEL



If you've ever cringed at the idea of "selling," you're not alone. Many optical professionals entered this field to help people see clearly — not to become salespeople. Yet every day in your optical, patients make purchasing decisions that affect both their vision and your bottom line.

So how do you grow revenue without feeling pushy or inauthentic? It starts with a simple shift: stop selling products and start educating patients on solutions that genuinely improve their vision and comfort.

## 1 Train Confidence, Not Closing Skills

Patients can tell when recommendations come from genuine care rather than commission. Confidence grows when your staff understand why a lens enhancement matters — such as how anti-fatigue lenses reduce digital strain or how premium coatings help patients see more comfortably throughout the day.

Try short, focused "Lens Learning" sessions each week. Choose one product, one story and one way to explain its benefit in everyday language. That repetition turns hesitation into confidence and transforms your staff from order-takers into trusted guides.

## 2 Use Tools That Teach, Not Tell

No one likes to feel sold to, but everyone appreciates being educated. Instead of explaining features verbally, use visual aids to make lens options easy to understand. A simple comparison card showing "Standard," "Enhanced" and

## When your staff become storytellers instead of salespeople, you create conversations that feel meaningful, not transactional.

"Premium" lenses help patients see the differences at a glance — literally.

### Example script:

"Most patients who spend a lot of time on screens prefer this option as it helps reduce glare and eye strain. Would you like to see the difference?"

When patients understand the why, they naturally move toward the solution that fits them best without anyone feeling pressured.

## 3 Create Confidence Through Storytelling

People connect to experiences, not technical specs. A short, relatable story makes an upgrade feel personal and authentic.

### For Instance:

"One of my patients who drives a lot said these lenses made a huge difference with night glare, it completely changed her comfort on the road."

Encourage your team to collect and share simple stories like this. It humanizes the conversation, builds credibility and helps

patients visualize how an upgrade could improve their daily life.

When your staff become storytellers instead of salespeople, you create conversations that feel meaningful, not transactional.

### Educate first. Earn trust always.

Opticals that thrive long term aren't the ones with the hardest push, they're the ones that teach with heart.

When your team leads with education and empathy, patients feel cared for and informed. They leave with better solutions, your staff feel proud of their recommendations, and your optical grows naturally through trust, not pressure.

When education comes first, sales take care of themselves. **OP**

**Dr. Fallon Patel, OD, is the founder of Fallon Vision Group and PulseIQ Solutions, an AI-powered training and KPI platform for health care teams. With a proven track record in business strategy and myopia management, she helps modern clinics drive growth, efficiency, and innovation with purpose.**

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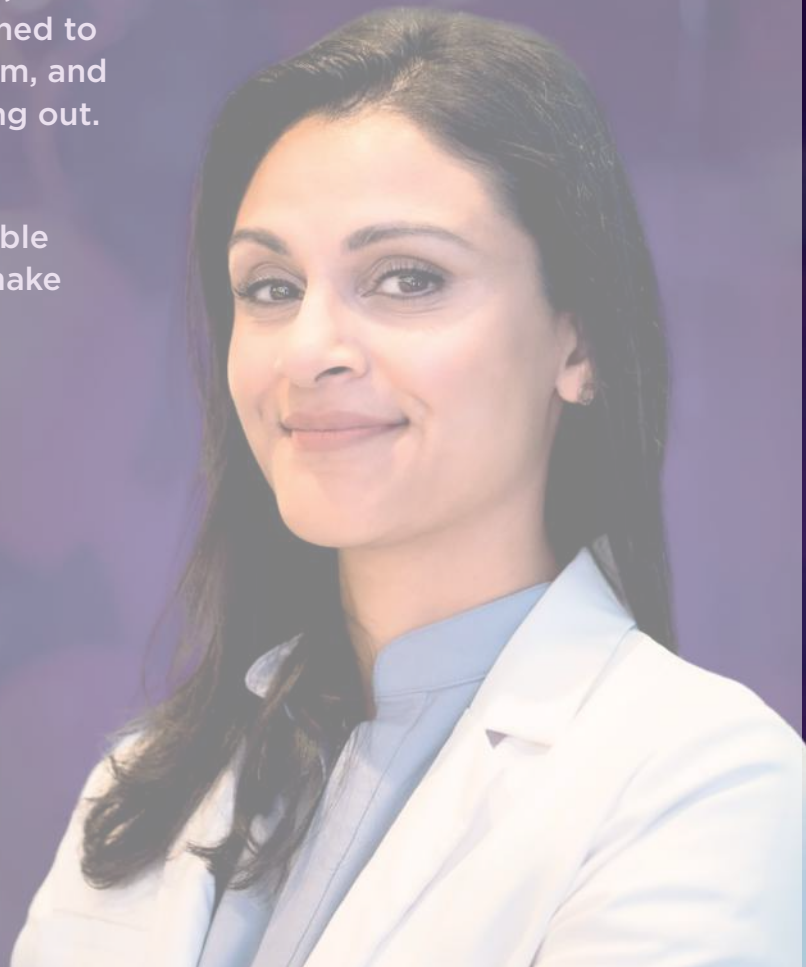
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# SCORPIO



**OCTOBER 23 - NOVEMBER 21**

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.

Scorpios are magnetic. They walk into a room and people turn their heads, not because they're loud, but because they radiate intensity. For these passionate water signs, eyewear isn't just an accessory; it's an extension of their mysterious aura.

Think bold, but never frivolous. Scorpios gravitate toward deep, dramatic colours — black, burgundy, midnight blue, gunmetal, or rose gold. Frames with sculptural edges, sharp cat-eyes, or geometric silhouettes reflect their fearless style. Oversized sunglasses are a Scorpio staple, letting them conceal their gaze until they choose to reveal it.

Craftsmanship matters. Premium acetate with marbled textures, titanium with an industrial edge, or matte finishes speak to their love of substance and intrigue. Just look at celebrity Scorpios like Leonardo DiCaprio, Kendall Jenner, Ryan Gosling, and Anne Hathaway, each known for eyewear choices that command attention.

For men, squared-off aviators or bold rectangular frames. For women, sharp cat-eyes or oversized rounds with gradient tints. Add polarized or photochromic lenses — Scorpios love hidden technology. **OP**



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