

ENHANCE THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE AND IMPROVE YOUR CAPTURE RATE

Now that you have learned how to enhance your office space and patient opportunities for improving your capture rate, we are ready to talk about the processes your practice has in place to support increased sales. Throughout the entire patient experience in your office, from the moment a patient walks through your door until he or she leaves, your practice processes should be maximizing opportunities to affect the patient's interest in purchasing eyewear. This article will provide tips on developing this process.

UPDATING THE DISPENSING PROCESS

Consider how you can incorporate these steps in your practice processes.



Start by making the appointment

The first communication with patients is important to set up the opportunity to discuss their current eyewear. Ask contact lens patients to bring their current eyeglasses to their exam and eyeglasses wearers to bring their sunglasses and other special-use glasses.



Reception area

Front office staff is critical in supporting a successful dispensing process. They can ensure that the medical history questionnaire collects information on patients' daily vision environment (work, hobbies and activities), vision problems and product interests. Plus, they can collect and examine patients' current lenses to make note of any scratches or damage to the frames for the doctor or dispensing staff to later discuss with the patient.



Eye exam

Patients may feel anxious about always giving the "right" answer during subjective refraction. To ease these concerns, reassure patients that they are doing fine as they make subtle distinctions in clarity of vision. This will help to reduce patients' hesitation to commit to an eyewear purchase. Remind patients that you will recommend the very best visual solution based on the exam findings and what has been learned about their unique needs. During the handoff to the optical, the doctor should personally convey the lens recommendation to the optician.

HELPFUL HINT

Use the information gathered before and during eye exams to uncover patients' needs for new eyewear. Ask questions about how patients typically use their eyes, including

- Do your eyes ever get tired from working at a computer all day?
- Are you frequently in and out of doors during the day?
- Are you ever bothered by glare and haloes when driving at night?
- How much time do you spend each day reading and doing other close-up work?
- Are there any problems with your current glasses?
- How well do your current glasses (or contact lenses) support your hobbies or sports?

By collecting and discussing this important information with your patients, you will be able to customize your recommendation based on their unique needs. This information will be especially helpful for encouraging contact lens wearers or patients without a prescription change to upgrade their existing glasses.

Patient-focused dispensing

The more you can personalize the dispensing process and eyewear recommendations to each patient, the more confident he or she will feel that you are recommending the best visual solution for him or her. Relate the benefits of eyeglasses to patients' daily activities or vision problems, as eyewear is both ordered and delivered. Compliment patients on their lens and frame choices and convey enthusiasm about how they are likely to enjoy their new eyeglasses. Focus on the benefits of the overall visual solution and present any managed care coverage as a discount rather than focusing on price. Although the cost of eyewear is not the most prevalent reason for walkouts, when patients cannot see the value of their purchase they may decide to go elsewhere.

Staff training

One reason that patients prefer to purchase eyewear from independent ECPs vs online retailers is the opportunity to try on and get a recommendation on their eyewear selections. Patients want to be confident that they are receiving the very best visual solution that's right for them. When practice staff do not appear to know about the latest products, are hesitant to discuss new technology or are unable to answer questions about eyewear authoritatively, patients may conclude that the office is out-of-date and uninterested in selling glasses. If the dispensing staff is not well-trained to guide patients to the best frame selection, patient anxiety grows, and some will decide to go where selection is a more comfortable experience. Just as the MBA program is helping you advance practice performance, your staff (and your bottom line) can benefit from customized training from ECP University on dispensing, product education and the patient experience.

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