



SPOTLIGHT

ISSUE 2



Optician Education and its Impact on Practice Profitability

The website LinkedIn recently posted an article entitled “The Licensed Optician – Brink of Extinction” and discussed the future of the licensed optician. Reflecting on the value of optical licensure, it should be worth discussing the impact of a licensed optician’s knowledge and expertise to their practice’s bottom line. While only 21 states have licensure requirements for opticians at this time, this certainly doesn’t mean that optical knowledge is unimportant in the other 29 states. Any office which chooses to dispense eyewear can increase its profitability by giving its opticians as much training as possible.

Some offices have their own training program for new opticians while some rely on their most experienced optician to train the newcomers. Occasionally, the new optician is given a few rudimentary lessons and sent out to sink or swim on their own. When this happens, it’s usually due to time constraints. The office is too busy to have one person dedicated to spending an entire week or two working one-on-one with the new person. The result is that the new hire has to ask questions as they

go and do the best they can. With patience and encouragement from the rest of the staff, the new optician learns over time, sometimes through trial and error.

This method, however, has limited usefulness. Most patients have mild to moderate prescriptions that do not require a lot of extra time and attention. But every office has patients that require extra care from an optician who has been well-trained or is highly experienced. These patients may have questions concerning their visual needs. Perhaps, they may have even had a prior bad experience and are very suspicious of opticians who sound like a “salesperson”. These patients may leave without visiting the dispensary if they felt like their needs were not addressed. This is an obvious example of how lack of training will affect your office’s bottom line. Other ways are not as obvious.

Remakes, product selection, and not discussing lifestyle visual needs are all areas which will have definite impact on your overall profitability. Fortunately, these are areas that you can gain control.

In order to reduce remakes, the optician should not only know how to take a proper seg height and an appropriate PD, but a few other things as well. Having a fundamental idea of how the finished glasses will look will eliminate unnecessary remakes. For example, it is important to understand that a large frame will not work well with high prescriptions. A new progressive lens wearer will not like the smaller reading area they have if they have not been discouraged from buying that cute frame with a 22mm “B” measurement. It is essential to understand the relationship between the patients’ PD and the frame PD. Remakes can be very costly to a practice and greatly impact its profitability.

The first priority of product selection should be what is best for the patient. However cost should also be factored in the final decision. That doesn't always mean selling the patient the "latest and greatest" or the most expensive lenses available. A young boy, for example, who is getting his first pair of glasses at age 10 with a prescription of -1.50 OU, will not require high index lenses but the features and benefits of trivex lenses should be explained to his parents and why this might be the best choice for him. More and more people are spending time on their hand-held devices and are now asking about lenses that will improve their visual comfort like Naturalite EyeApp or the Shamir Relax. An experienced optician is able to determine who would be a good candidate for these lenses and who might be better served by going into a standard progressive.

Lifestyle selling can be the hardest area to incorporate into the practice, but it will win you the most loyal patients. In order to do this properly, the optician must have a wide range of knowledge of different lenses, coatings, and materials, as well as the ability to gain the trust of the patient. Being more than just an "order taker" or a "frame stylist" will allow the patient to see the optician as a valued expert. Listen to your patients as they tell you how they spend their time and any issues that they are currently having during these activities. This will assist with lens recommendations. It may have never occurred to your patient that they can get a pair of glasses to use specifically for their favorite hobby or to read in bed.

To increase optical knowledge and better serve your patients, it may be worthwhile to prepare and take the ABO exam. The American Board of Opticianry conducts exams at least twice a year and has materials available to study beforehand. YouTube videos are readily available and can be very informative while assisting in exam preparation as well. There is a cost for the exam, therefore adequate time and preparation should be devoted before taking the exam. There is a real sense of accomplishment upon successfully completing the test. Even if you are not living in one of the 21 states which require licensure for opticians, it is definitely worth the time and money for your patients and the practice's bottom line.

NEW! NUPOLAR INFINITE GRAY

If you have ever had a patient complain that their polarized lenses are too dark or too light, then Younger has introduced a new lens that may solve both of these needs! The latest release from Younger Optics is called NuPolar Infinite Gray. These lenses are for the patients who want a high efficiency polarized Rx lens that can function seamlessly from shade to bright sunlight and anything in between. Available in polycarbonate, the darkness of the lens is controlled with a new responsive photochromic technology that offers the widest range of light absorption of any polarized photochromic lens. In its lightest state, it has approximately 35% light transmittance and while in its darkest state, the light transmittance is around 9%.

NuPolar Infinite gray lenses block 100% UVA and UVB.

Infinite Gray lenses are available in Single Vision, all Naturalite lens designs and most Shamir digital designs. This is a great time to give them a try! **Receive \$10.00 off** on invoice from March 1st through May 31st. Call your Midwest Labs location for more information!

