

Foresight

For eye care professionals in the Health and Wellness Division

September/October 2016

Walmart
Save money. Live better.



Savings Made Simple

Two Walmart-affiliated Women Honored in *Vision Monday*

Walmart was well-represented in the pages of *Vision Monday's* annual influential women in optical listing. This year's report, "Women Who Wow," featured **Carmen Bauza** in the Executive Suite category and **Naheed Ahmad, OD**, in the Mentors category.

Bauza is senior vice president and general merchandise manager for Walmart Health and Wellness and Consumables. The publication stated that she was chosen because of the innovations that she brought to the Walmart Optical division. "She is also

a rising star and leading mentor—especially to women at Walmart," the report stated.

Bauza joined Walmart about 10 years ago, and moved from beauty and personal care merchandising into her current role in 2013. She wrote, "When I was approached to take on health, wellness,



Carmen Bauza

pharmacy and optical, I knew it was a big opportunity and a huge challenge. So I did an assessment with all of our partners, associates and customers to learn how to add value to Walmart. It's very important to have diversity of thought, to bring together people with a range of backgrounds and



Dr. Ahmad

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Incorporate Dry Eye Services to Benefit Patients, Gain Referrals

Adding dry eye care to your practice can help patients and the bottom line, but what's the best way to accomplish both? **Adam Phelps, OD**, was among the practitioners who had a chance to learn about dry eye and the business approach at a day-long meeting held at the SECO 2016 meeting in Atlanta.

Energieyes, the Association of Corporate-affiliated Optometrists, hosted the seminar and has been offering training to help practices make the move to offering full-scope medical eye care services. The SECO dry eye morning session was led by **Scot Morris, OD, FAAO**, an expert in ocular



Dr. Phelps

surface disease and a practice consultant. "He presented some fantastic information on the latest in dry eye and ocular surface disease management," Dr. Phelps says.

The afternoon sessions on the business side were done by **Eric Botts, OD**, current president of the Energieyes board of directors. "He covered coding and billing, as well as the logistics of how to implement some of the newer technologies in our practice," says Dr. Phelps, an independent optometrist whose practice, Phelps Eye Care, in Crossville, Tennessee, is located inside a Walmart.

"Dr. Botts is an expert at coding and billing, and his knowledge can help take a regular clinic and make it exceptional through proper coding and billing practices based on the latest medical services we learned about during the meeting," Dr. Phelps says. "For me, the take-home

point was that our patients deserve the highest quality of care available, that new technology is changing the face of dry eye monitoring and that happy patients make for happy practices."

Dr. Phelps' practice handles a range of conditions, including glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, dry eye, cataracts and macular degeneration. After the dry

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Building on Our Strength

Walmart and Families Are a Good Match

By Chris Cordero, OD
Walmart and Sam's Club Talent Acquisitions and Professional Relations – Optometry

August has traditionally been known as Optometrist Appreciation Month. So I want to begin by acknowledging the effort, commitment and professionalism of ODs who work within Walmart and Sam's Club settings. I want you to know how much you are appreciated – not just in August but in every month, as well.

I like that Optometrist Appreciation Month coincides with the back-to-school season because it is one area where I think that there is tremendous overlap.

There's a reason that the aisles at Walmart and Sam's Club are jammed with back-to-school shoppers in the late summer and fall. The stores offer families a tremendous value at what is becoming an increasingly expensive time of year for many. Children need bags of school supplies; many have outgrown their clothes and shoes. As articles in this issue of *Foresight* point out, it's important to include annual eye exams for children as part of the back-to-school checklist.

The season doesn't end when the first school buses roll. You can reach out to your communities of parents, school nurses, teachers and pediatricians to make sure that they know that you are willing and able

to see children who show signs and symptoms of visual difficulties in school or who fail a school-conducted vision screening.

Now and throughout the year, many of these families are coming to Walmart to do their shopping anyway. By making sure that your office looks kid-friendly and is open during hours that make it convenient for a parent to bring a child in, you can help set a child on a better course for a lifetime of learning.

That's the wonderful impact that you have as an independent doctor of optometry in a Walmart or Sam's Club setting. You truly have the opportunity to serve your community by providing quality eye care services. For that, and for all that you do, you have earned my deepest appreciation. *

Feel free to reach out to me at Chris.Cordero@walmart.com



Dr. Cordero

Making Time for Ocular Emergencies and Urgencies

Doctor reserves two appointment slots per day to deal with the unexpected

For Kevin Neal, OD, making room for walk-ins and emergency patients isn't an

inconvenience, it's a practice-builder.

His independent practice, located in a Walmart Supercenter in Cullman, Alabama, is busy pretty much year round. "I don't know that my practice is necessarily unique, but it's kind of unique in our area, because we're a full-scope medical optometric office inside a corporate setting. So we stay busy."

While the task of dealing with walk-ins and emergencies can be a challenge, it's important for the health of the community and the health of his practice. "It can make for a very long day, because you have to squeeze those people in between other patients who have been booked for two or three weeks."

The solution he's using is to leave preprogrammed gaps in the schedule, typically a 30-minute slot in the morning and in the afternoon. "They're for designated emergencies first, if they are needed, and

then we'll use them for walk-ins. That's worked for us. And if neither of those comes into play, we've got a nice gap to catch up."

His staff is well-trained in triage, "so I can just walk in and treat the problem."

One of his key staff members is a certified ophthalmic technician who has worked in an ophthalmic surgery practice. She can discern the difference between "a true ocular emergency or an ocular urgency, such as, 'I'm out of contact lenses.' She's shared that with the rest of the staff so they know the appropriate questions to ask of patients."

Not many other optometrists in his region take his approach to handling



Dr. Neal

Foresight

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ODs Find Management Roles Offer a Challenging Career Path

After **Bethany Heinz, OD, MBA**, graduated from Michigan College of Optometry in 2004, she practiced optometry for two years but realized daily patient care wasn't her passion.

She joined the recruiting team at Walmart for nearly three years.

She found that she enjoyed the challenges of working in stores to solve problems or pitch in with ideas to improve efficiency.

Dr. Heinz now is a Market Health & Wellness Director in Wisconsin, supporting both the pharmacy and Vision Center operations in her area. "There is no typical day. No day is like another. What you think your day looks like in the morning may change entirely," she says about her current role.

Dr. Heinz says that her MBA helps her. "Optometry schools train us very well in patient care. But I had only one business class, and that was directed toward private practices." That wasn't enough to help her manage a \$100 million budget, understand hiring, recruiting and motivating a team of pharmacy and optical division staff. "I'm essentially managing a large business," she says.

Before Dr. Heinz went to optometry school, she was an optician. After optometry school, Dr. Heinz became an associate OD in a Sam's Club in Appleton, Wisconsin, then returned to be the Walmart Market Health & Wellness Director in that area. Dr. Heinz also earned her MBA, with a focus on health care management from Regis University in Denver. "That's a nice part of being affiliated with Walmart. There are so many career opportunities." She encourages other ODs

"Optometry schools train us very well in patient care. But I had only one business class, and that was directed toward private practices."

— Dr. Heinz

who might be interested in this career path to learn more. "You have to have both the

passion for patient care, and you need to want to motivate a team. I enjoy multitasking and I really want to win," she says, describing the characteristics that suit her for this role.

Regional Talent Specialist **Darin Closson, OD**, graduated from Pacific University College of Optometry in 1997 and completed a residency in Oklahoma. He began working for an independent OD working in a Walmart location in Fort Smith, Arkansas. "That gave me my first exposure to the Walmart setting," he says. He became a Regional Talent Specialist for Walmart in 2006 and finds that it's an unexpected role in which he can thrive.

"Before I went to optometry school, I was considering a career in business and international relations/public affairs. The business aspects of that really attracted me, but I was also intrigued by science and patient care," he says. Once he became an eye care provider, he really enjoyed the patient interactions.

"It's important to have optometrists represented in management...To some degree, I'm like an ombudsman."

— Dr. Closson

"I enjoy being able to help them in some capacity, whether it's optometry-related or not. Some of my favorite practice stories are with patients whom I helped quit smoking."

In this role as Regional Talent Specialist, he finds himself intrigued by the role that optometry plays in the mission of Walmart's Health and Wellness Division. "My interest is fueled by my interest in people and in business." He appreciates the chance to travel and meet new patients, as well as Health and Wellness associates, pharmacists and optometrists.

"It's important to have optometrists represented in management. When I speak with employed and independent optometrists in Walmart locations, they feel that I can relate to their concerns. To some degree, I'm like an ombudsman. I've walked in their shoes, and I can relate to the Walmart perspective and to

the ODs' perspective."

Pratil Lal, BOptom, OD, MBA, is the Market Health and Wellness Director for Walmart in Seattle, Washington. He received his optometry degree in Australia in 2000 and then his OD degree in University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. After graduating, "I was in clinical practice initially as well as in leased practices as an independent OD, but I was also heavily involved in the business management side," he says. He was then hired as a director of operations and professional relations for a large optical chain before moving to Vancouver, Canada, his wife's hometown, where he worked in operations and business development roles. He joined Walmart in late 2015 as Market Health and Wellness Director.

"I have talked to and recruited ODs straight out of optometry school as well as those who have been practicing for many years," he says. "We've been seeing a fairly wide range of ODs looking for excellent clinical opportunities with Walmart. I see Walmart's investment in its overall Health and Wellness business as a significant advantage and its commitment to grow its optical business should pique the interest of any clinically oriented OD looking for associate or lease opportunities."

In Washington, optometrists are lease-

"I have talked to and recruited ODs straight out of optometry school as well as those who have been practicing for many years."

— Dr. Lal

holders. He sees opportunities for entrepreneurial ODs to start with one location and add others. "I see that as a significant opportunity, to lease, then develop and manage multiple practices. This can also open up other opportunities with Walmart such as my current role as a Market Director or other management roles in talent recruitment or professional relations." *



Dr. Heinz



Dr. Closson



Dr. Lal

Contact Lenses and Medical Services Are Two Important Ways to Expand Practice Reach

Dawn Van, OD, pays special attention when parents with young children come in. This is a great opportunity for her practice because building a connection with those young families can bring growth to any practice.



Dr. Van

The typical summer back-to-school season is a good time for connecting with these price-conscious parents and letting them know what the options are with eye care. "I talk to them first to see what their child is interested in, whether they play sports, or are involved in dance, for example, and whether or not they could use contact lenses." Typically, contact lens sellers will discount contact lenses during the back-to-school season to capture patients who might not want to wear sports goggles or eyeglasses during fall activities. "So that means that contact lenses are more affordable, which is a nice option because sometimes kids don't like to wear eyeglasses or goggles for sports."

She also tells them that buying a six-month supply of contact lenses could benefit from varying promotions offered by contact lens sellers; therefore, their annual supply is an even more affordable price when purchased all at the same time. "About half of those conversions turn into, 'Okay, we'll try that.' So it's a good conversion rate." Her practice—Broward Vision Care, with

locations in two Walmart Supercenters in Broward County, Florida—draws revenue solely from professional fees. "So even if we get one conversion a day, that's a big increase in overall annual revenue," she says.

It's a win-win all around, she says, because typically contact lens patients return to her practice more regularly than eyeglasses-only patients. "This is a good practice-builder over time," she says. Her patient population is fairly young. Dr. Van estimates that pediatric patients comprise about 40 percent of her patients. Adults between the ages of 20 to 60 are roughly another 40 percent, and the remaining 20 percent is over 60. With the range of contact lenses available today, she can offer an option for full-time or part-time contact lens wear for nearly every patient who is interested. She also offers specialized RGP fitting for those patients who need them.

She encourages patients to try daily disposable contact lenses; she also reminds patients that daily disposals are the best option and most sterile way to wear contact lenses. With a proper contact lens fitting and evaluation, she will provide them with some trial lenses. She says, "We'll give you enough lenses to try out for the entire week and see you back for a follow up to see how you did. There are no obligations to purchase any supply of contact lenses at this point. It's just an opportunity for you to try it and see if contact lenses are for you."

This suggestion often works. Contact lenses have advantages that younger patients like, and the practice benefits too. "Reimbursements from managed care plans

have diminished recently, and I think a lot of practices have slowed down significantly," she says. "I'm trying to make patients aware that there are other options of vision correction. It helps them, and it generates income for us."

Having strategies for increasing revenue is essential, she says. A lot of practices nationwide are experiencing declines in income. One reason is the availability of insurance under the Affordable Care Act. "People who didn't have insurance prior would go to [independent ODs located inside] Walmart for eye exams because of the lower cost and convenience," she says. Now that some of these patients have the ability to use their managed care vision or health insurance at other places, it's important for her to let them know that she is still available and can still take care of their eye care needs, by providing convenient weekend hours with double-doctor coverage, accepting same day walk-ins, and taking care of any medical eye care needs. "Offering full-scope optometry and great service is what ODs can do to encourage patients to choose us over going to another provider on their insurance panels."

So, providing medical services is important. "Take as many medical insurance plans as you can and treat red eyes, ocular diseases, and bill insurances accordingly," Dr. Van says. Make sure that patients know you are a provider on their insurances, because it makes a difference. If a practice doesn't accept the insurance, it's very likely that the patient will go to a provider who does, she says. *

Women Honored in *Vision Monday*

Continued from page 1

experiences."

Dr. Ahmad, director of two independent practices located inside Walmart stores in Rosewell, Georgia, was selected as a Mentor in the annual report. She told *Vision Monday* that she "prioritizes communication and believes that patients should be in the know about every step of the treatment process—from procedures to diagnoses and

treatment options."

Dr. Ahmad is a member of the American Optometric Association, the

#Women Who Wow

Georgia Optometric Association, a part of a leadership team for the Walmart-affiliated ODs in Atlanta and serves as secretary for Energeyes, the Association of Corporate-

affiliated Optometrists, where she mentors young ODs in corporate-affiliated practices.

She wrote, "My advice is to do your best, work hard and don't let anyone tell you that you can't do something. Optometry offers so many ways to practice and allows you to tailor your career the way you want or need it to be."

You can read the whole report here: <http://www.visionmonday.com/vm-reports/article/women-who-wow/> *

Help Your Patients Find Relief From Dry Eye Symptoms

New ways for evaluating dry eye offer optometrists a way to expand the care that they provide and increase practice revenue, says **Eric Botts, OD**.

Dry eye disease affects about 25 million people in the U.S., yet a large share of them—40 percent—don't report any symptoms, he says. If left untreated, dry eye causes inflammation of the ocular surface and can lead to ulcers, cornea



Dr. Botts

scars and reduced vision. Patients who suffer from dry eye symptoms, whether those are caused by aqueous deficiency, evaporative dry eye or some combination of the two, are often desperate for relief. However, many don't even mention it to their eye care professionals because they feel that these symptoms are normal.

Dry eye conditions can also exacerbate patient dissatisfaction with contact lens wear or complaints about fluctuating vision. It's important to identify and treat the underlying condition so that patients experience the best results from their prescribed eyewear.

The kind of dry eye treatment he

recommends means an investment in equipment, lab-test capability and staff training. In addition, ODs have to develop a protocol for the patient visit and the tests needed to identify the condition, determine the severity and choose a course of treatment.

Dr. Botts has an independent practice inside a Walmart in Macomb, Illinois, and he does presentations on the advantages for ODs in a corporate setting. He has been including his approach to dry eye care in his practice for more than a year.

Adding dry eye therapies will improve patient care and loyalty, Dr. Botts says. "It's been a really successful addition," he says.

"[Dry eye] had just been ignored over the years because we really didn't have a way to diagnose it. Now we do."

— Dr. Botts

"It really, really makes patients happy, and financially it's been a huge building block for my practice."

New equipment, like an Oculus Keratograph 5M, an advanced corneal topographer, is very helpful. Dr. Botts uses several lab tests: TearLab, which measures osmolarity in a patient's tears; and InflammADry, which

detects MMP-9, an inflammatory marker that at higher levels indicates dry eye disease. Lissamine green is needed as well to determine dry eye severity.

Identifying the presence of dry eye can involve a Keratograph 5M screening or the Ocular Surface Disease Index questions. A knowledge of the patient's medical history and current medications is important, prior to testing with TearLab or InflammADry. There are many options for treating the condition, ranging from the use of Omega 3/Fish oil, artificial tears, ophthalmic or oral medications.

The technology has been available for some time but many ODs are still on the sidelines, he says. The condition "had just been ignored over the years because we really didn't have a way to diagnose it," he says. "Now we do."

Incorporating dry eye services into your practice makes sense, says Dr. Botts. Patients will be relieved to hear that their symptoms can be addressed with a more targeted approach than regular use of artificial tears. Treating dry eye for contact lens wearers might impact the dropout rate for those who feel they are simply too uncomfortable to stay with contact lenses. And it's an entry into providing medical services and letting patients know that eye care practitioners' expertise extends beyond refractive care. *

Incorporate Dry Eye Services

Continued from page 1

eye seminar, he began adding some of the recommended equipment and tests, such as TearLab, which measures tear osmolarity, as well as InflammADry, which tests for an inflammatory marker in tears. His two technicians perform TearLab and InflammADry testing before he enters the room. "The TearLab gives me a number that I can share with patients, which illustrates how they are improving or not improving," Dr. Phelps says.

Increasing the emphasis on diagnosing

and treating dry eye has been a success so far, he says. "We had a mindset change and started taking dry eye more seriously. The result has been improved patient care, which fosters loyalty from patients, and of course that is good for the practice."

He also had a trial run with the Keratograph 5M, an advanced corneal topographer with multifaceted dry eye testing capabilities, but hasn't made that purchase yet. "The Keratograph 5M was pretty awesome, but we have not pulled the

trigger on purchasing the instrument yet, but we hope we will be able to make room for it in our practice soon."

Current and new patients are hearing about the treatment options as they come in, and Dr. Phelps plans to add videos about the treatment on his website. Dr. Phelps added, "The SECO Sunday dry eye seminar was great and it has already made a huge difference in my practice, and I appreciate all that Energyeyes is doing for our profession and corporate optometrists." *

Good Vision Is an Academic Necessity

Information to share with families and teachers from the American Optometric Association

It has been estimated that as much as 80 percent of the learning a child does occurs through his or her eyes. A child's eyes are constantly in use in the classroom and at play. When his or her vision is not functioning properly, education and participation in sports can suffer.

As children progress in school, they face increasing demands on their visual abilities. The size of print in schoolbooks becomes smaller, and the amount of time spent reading and studying increases significantly. Increased class work and homework place significant demands on the child's eyes.

When certain visual skills have not developed or are poorly developed, learning is difficult and stressful, and children will typically

- Avoid reading and other near visual work as much as possible;
- Attempt to do the work anyway, but with a lowered level of comprehension or efficiency;
- And/or experience discomfort, fatigue and a short attention span.

Some children with learning difficulties exhibit specific behaviors of hyperactivity and distractibility. These children are often labeled as having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). However, undetected and untreated vision problems can elicit some of the very same signs and symptoms. Due to these similarities, some children may be mislabeled as having ADHD when, in fact, they have an undetected vision problem.

Because vision may change frequently during the school years, regular eye and vision care is important. *

Signs of Eye and Vision Problems

These are signs that may indicate a child has vision problem:

- Frequent eye-rubbing or blinking
- Short attention span
- Avoiding reading and other close activities
- Frequent headaches
- Covering one eye
- Tilting the head to one side
- Holding reading materials close to the face
- An eye turning in or out
- Seeing double
- Losing place when reading
- Difficulty remembering what he or she read *

Vision Skills Needed For School Success

Vision is more than just the ability to see clearly, or having 20/20 eyesight. It is also the ability to understand and respond to what is seen. Basic visual skills include the ability to focus the eyes, use both eyes together as a team, and move them effectively. Here are other visual perceptual skills.

- **Recognition:** the ability to tell the difference between letters like "b" and "d"
- **Comprehension:** the ability to picture in the mind what is happening in a story, for example
- **Retention:** the ability to remember and recall details of what was read

In addition, every child needs to have the following vision skills for effective reading and learning.

- **Visual acuity:** the ability to see clearly in the distance for viewing the chalkboard, at an intermediate distance for the computer, and up close for reading a book
- **Eye focusing:** the ability to maintain clear vision as the distance from objects change. Eye focusing allows the child to easily maintain clear vision over time like

when reading a book or writing a report

- **Eye tracking:** the ability to keep the eyes on target when looking from one object to another, moving the eyes along a printed page or following a moving object like a thrown ball
- **Eye teaming:** the ability to coordinate and use both eyes together and to be able to judge distances and see depth for class work and sports.
- **Eye-hand coordination:** the ability to use visual information to monitor and direct the hands when drawing a picture or trying to hit a ball
- **Visual perception:** the ability to organize images on a printed page into letters, words and ideas and to understand and remember what is read.

If any of these visual skills are lacking or not functioning properly, a child will have to work harder. This can lead to headaches, fatigue and other eyestrain problems. Parents and teachers need to be alert for symptoms that may indicate a child has a vision problem. *

Sports Vision and Eye Protection

Clear distance vision, good depth perception, a wide field of vision and effective eye-hand coordination are all specific visual skills needed for sports.

A child who consistently underperforms a certain skill in a sport, such as always hitting the front of the rim in basketball or swinging late at a pitched ball in baseball, may have a vision problem. If visual skills are not adequate, the child may continue to perform poorly. Correction of vision problems with eyeglasses or contact lenses, or a program of eye exercises called vision therapy can correct many vision problems, enhance vision skills, and improve sports vision performance.

Student athletes, especially in certain high-risk sports, need eye protection. Thousands of children suffer sports-related eye injuries each year and nearly all can be prevented by using the proper protective eyewear. Eye protection should also be worn for other risky activities, such as lawn mowing and trimming. *



Providing Medical Optometry Is Essential as Health Care Economics Change

Dmitry Gutkovich, OD, MBA, thinks a lot of corporate ODs are leaving money on the table when it comes to defining the scope of their practice.



Dr. Gutkovich

Dr. Gutkovich talks to many Walmart optometrists and hears obstacles. Some ODs simply don't want the complications that come with medical billing and care.

Resistance to medical care actually goes against the business model already in place. "The whole idea with a Walmart location is traffic. Increased traffic means I see more patients and provide better care," Dr. Gutkovich says. "By utilizing medical insurance, you create a win-win for everyone involved." ODs can't do much about their

fixed costs of running an office, but they sure can increase their revenue by providing better care to their patients, he says.

There are some established ODs who don't do medical billing, even though they could, Dr. Gutkovich says. "I spoke to one doctor and I said, 'Why aren't you doing medical care? You already work part-time in an ophthalmologist's office. So you have the experience.' He said, 'I'm busy enough.' But I think that attitude is changing as new graduates enter the field," he says. "Most new graduates are very much medically focused."

It's not just about revenue opportunities. Changes in health care are affecting optometry just as they are for every other health care provider. "In the

future, I think most patients will have some sort of insurance; we'll be seeing fewer and fewer patients paying out of pocket," he says. "If you are not on their insurance panel, they will go elsewhere. It's that simple."

Traditional practice ODs are facing similar pressures. "They will not survive without being a provider of medical care." Prosperity lies in adaptation.

Dr. Gutkovich's practice is inside a

Walmart Vision Center in Islandia, New York. He has been on Walmart's Independent OD Advisory Board since 2008, and is involved with Energyeyes, the Association of Corporate-affiliated Optometrists, serving on its board of directors. "The goal behind Energyeyes is to provide the tools corporate optometrists need to enhance eye care in an inherently unique environment," he says. Energyeyes offers CE, mentoring, a free website and is using its group purchasing power to get better pricing for the advanced equipment. *

"The whole idea with a Walmart location is traffic. Increased traffic means I see more patients and provide better care."

— Dr. Gutkovich

November Is Diabetes Awareness Month

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers a variety of resources to health care professionals in advance of Diabetes Awareness Month in November and World Diabetes Day on Nov. 14.

One of these is a special toolkit for optometry, as well as podiatry, pharmacy and dentistry, which includes patient fact sheets, patient education sheets and care checklists, tips on talking with patients about diabetes and professional references. It is available at cdc.gov/diabetes/ndep/toolkits/ppod.html. *

DIABETES AND YOU: Healthy Eyes Matter!

It is important to take good care of your eyes when you have diabetes. Did you know that diabetes can harm your eyes? The good news is that you can take steps to help keep your eyes healthy. The steps below will get you started.

Tips to Keep Your Eyes Healthy

- Get a dilated eye exam at least once a year and share the results with your primary care doctor.
 - In this exam, you will get eye drops to make your pupils larger. Pupils are the black circles in the middle of your eyes. The drops are painless and help your eye doctor see inside your eyes to look for signs of health problems.
 - A dilated eye exam can help your eye doctor find and treat problems to keep you from losing your vision from diabetes.
 - Your eye doctor may take pictures of your eyes with a tool called retinal photography. This helps to see the retina, which is at the back part of your eyes.
 - Be sure to keep your next eye doctor appointment.
- Wash your eye doorknobs away if you:
 - See little black lines or spots that don't go away.
 - See any red spots.
 - See red fog.
 - Have a sudden change in how clearly you see.
 - Take longer than usual to adjust to darkness.

How Can Diabetes Harm Your Eyes?

- Diabetes is the main cause of blindness among people younger than 74 years.
- Severe eye problems happen more often among people with diabetes.
- It is important to find and treat eye problems early to protect your vision.

Where Do I Get a Dilated Eye Exam?

- You should schedule an appointment with an ophthalmologist or an optometrist for your yearly dilated exam. Both of these eye doctors can give you a dilated eye exam and check your eyes.

NDP® National Diabetes Education Program
A program of the National Institutes of Health, National Center for Diabetes Center and Prevention.

Provide Urgent Care

Continued from page 2

walk-ins and emergencies, which surprises him. "It's been a good business-builder for me," he says. Plus, he's built connections with nearby urgent-care physicians. When they have a walk-in patient with an eye injury, "I tell them, 'Don't hang yourself out and lose sleep all weekend. Just send them over to me.' It's been fantastic, and it gives them a little more comfort, too," he says.

Dr. Neal has been at his current location 16 years, during which time his practice staff has learned about the medical services that go beyond traditional refractive services. "It kind of drives us to a higher calling," he says. *

CONTACT LENS TECHNOLOGY FOR FIGHTER PILOTS TO EVERYDAY PATIENT NEEDS



Christopher Lievens, OD, MS, FAOC
The Eye Center at Southern College of Optometry
Memphis, Tennessee

Dr. Lievens was compensated by Alcon for his participation in this advertorial.

As an optometrist previously serving in the United States Air Force, my aim was “to ensure our airmen are able to achieve ideal vision.” Having later worked in a private practice and now as a university educator, I have this same goal for all of my patients, whether a pilot flying a combat air patrol mission or a mom driving her precious cargo to a play date. Not only should contact lenses provide excellent visual acuity, they must also be comfortable throughout the day. I therefore recommend for most of my patients the same daily disposable contact lenses that I wear—DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus®.

Living in a Digital World

Daily disposable contact lenses are an excellent choice for vision correction for many of my patients.

However, one drawback is that contact lenses can disrupt the tear film when placed on the surface of the eye, which in turn can increase the risk of dryness and discomfort.^{2,3} Moreover, computers

Figure 1. The Blink-Activated Moisture of DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® Contact Lenses Helps Support Tear Film Stability.*



are an ever-growing part of our daily lives, and the more that people stare at digital devices—from the control panel of an F16 fighter jet to the latest app on a smart phone—the more they experience reductions in blink rates and destabilization of the tear film.^{4,5} One solution for addressing these multiple challenges is the DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® family of lenses, which incorporate a proprietary blink-activated moisture technology to help support the stability of the tear film.*



The DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® Family of Lenses

How does this technology work? DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® contact lenses are made from a hydrogel polymer that contains the moisturizer polyvinyl alcohol (PVA). What is remarkable about this material is that some of the PVA molecules are not bound within the structural matrix of the lens, allowing for sustained release over the surface of the eye every time a patient blinks (Figure 1).⁶ Another important quality of this material, particularly for younger patients and new wearers, is that it provides “built-in compliance”; discomfort becomes obvious if a patient

tries to wear DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® lenses for longer than the recommended period, encouraging daily replacement.⁷ It’s reassuring to know a 2009 study showed that more than 90% of patients wearing DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® lenses are compliant with the recommended replacement frequency.⁸

Overall, DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® contact lenses have been found to support better stability of the tear film compared with other leading brands of lenses.^{6,8} These results, combined with my own clinical experience, have led me to select DAILIES® AquaComfort Plus® contact lenses as the first choice of vision correction for many of my patients, especially new and younger wearers. While these patients may not need to meet the rigorous vision requirements of the Air Force, they all deserve optical care that helps them see, look and feel their best.

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