

Making *Contact*

SPRING 2009

CooperVision

SEE BEYOND THE ORDINARY™

Learn how to save patients money on contact lenses, control costs in your practice and explain free trial lens coupons to patients who wear spectacles.

Becoming Penny Wise But *Not* Pound Foolish

Creative strategies to save patients money on contact lenses and other related supplies.

In these tough economic times, patients are looking for ways to save money — yet keep their eyes healthy. To save a few pennies, patients may think they need to make sacrifices when it comes to wearing contact lenses. But some practices are finding creative ways to help them save on the lenses they want and you can, too. Here are three strategies you and the optometrists you work with can consider:

1. Annual supplies. One strategy to maximize savings for patients is to suggest they purchase annual supplies of contact lenses. Jason R. Miller, OD, MBA, partner at EyeCare Professionals of Powell in Powell, Ohio, takes this approach.

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— Jason R. Miller, OD, MBA



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delivers the lenses straight to their doorsteps at no extra charge. We also save them money by controlling our costs and offering the lenses at market price along with rebates just for annual supplies,” Dr. Miller says. “Annual supplies also save money for the practice in terms of staff time. Whenever patients request contact lenses, we’d normally have to pull their charts, make sure they’ve had a recent exam

“I Don’t Want an Annual Supply.”

Annual supplies save patients money, but sometimes patients don’t buy into the idea. Here are some common objections to purchasing a yearly supply of contact lenses and what to say that could change their minds:

- **“I don’t want to pay for my lenses all at once.”** Explain to patients that it actually costs less to buy their contact lenses in bulk because they pay less per box. Plus, they won’t have to re-order lenses for an entire year.
- **“My prescription changes too much.”** Dr. Miller tells patients who have changing prescriptions that, “Our supplier will ship the boxes to you with ‘right’ and ‘left’ stickers on the boxes. We suggest you not write on the boxes or open them so we can exchange the unopened boxes at no extra charge and still give you the annual-supply rate.”
- **“I try to wear my lenses for longer periods so that I use fewer of them.”** Explain to patients how important it is to stick to the contact lens replacement schedule to ensure their eyes stay healthy. “By wearing lenses longer than recommended,” Dr. Miller explains, “people increase their risk of corneal infections.”

so the prescription is current, jot down the payment information and place the order. We prefer to do that only once a year.”

2. Rebates. Contact lens rebates are a great way to save patients money, and they’re an important tool in selling annual supplies. Patients can download rebate coupons online, although it’s best for employees to keep them in the office to distribute to patients. Rebates typically offer greater savings the more boxes patients’ buy, so they’re particularly useful in practices that sell annual supplies. What’s more, some manufacturer rebates offset fitting fees associated with prescribing their lenses.

Dr. Miller says his employees use tear-off coupon pads for solutions and place rebate coupons in sample kits that include free samples of their solutions. “This helps patients save money and gives them an extra incentive to buy the solution we’ve prescribed for their specific type of contact lens,” he says.

3. Promotions. Promotions like holiday specials, gift certificates for annual supplies and eye exams, or contact lenses bundled with spectacles or solutions provide great savings to patients.

Dr. Miller offers several promotions. “We provide a savings on

Becoming Penny Wise But *Not* Pound Foolish (cont.)

CooperVision Rebates

Patients and staff can go to CooperVision.com, click on "New Rebates," and download a contact lens rebate coupon.



eyeglasses as an incentive for contact lens wearers to update their back-up pair of eyeglasses, but it can be hard to bundle them because lens and frame prices vary so much," he says. "We also have offered holiday gift packages in the past. The gift packages include a gift certificate for contact lenses or sunglasses and a starter kit of contact lens solution. This can be used as a nice holiday gift promotion for teens."

Together, these three strategies can help eyecare practices like yours save patients money on contact lenses. So even when times are tough, patients can wear the lenses they enjoy and receive a few extras without breaking the bank. ■

Save Your Practice Time – And Money

Help boost your practice's bottom line by staying on top of inventory and making the best use of Internet resources.

Is your eyecare practice tightening its belt? You can play a key role in saving money and improving the bottom line. In particular, you can make small changes to your inventory practices and get information from the Internet to make a huge impact. Here's how:

Managing Inventory

The key to inventory management is always to have what you need and never let supplies gather dust and end up in the trash. It's about ordering different product categories together, such as contact lenses, solutions and cases, or dilating drops and fluorescein strips so you can help save on shipping costs. And if you use supplies in high volume, you can order them in bulk to reduce costs even more.

"My staff uses two forms of online training through our Vision Source group and CooperVision. ... The staff receives the essential tools we want them to have, such as learning some of the technical jargon and the processes we use to fit patients. ... They learn, and we save time and money."

— John L. Schachet, OD



"I don't keep much inventory for contact lenses – just a couple of lens types that we use the most," explains John L. Schachet, OD, of Eyecare Consultants – Vision Source in Englewood, Colo. "Our five doctors all have preferences, so we stock a couple of the most popular lenses that we dispense, and, of course, our diagnostic lenses."

Once you've accumulated inventory, the challenge is to ensure that it gets used in a timely manner to prevent it from expiring on the shelf. One way to avoid waste is to ensure that the older products are always kept in front of the newer supplies so the older products are sold first. In addition, keeping inventory low saves the practice money and valuable space.



“There are different buying groups that offer ways to get lower per-box rates. Sometimes it’s an end-of-quarter special, or we may purchase a bank of contact lenses — for example, 100 boxes of a specific lens — and pay a lower price per box up front. When my staff places an order, the lenses come out of that prepaid bank.” — Jason R. Miller, OD, MBA



not all of your staff training, online in the office. Many optometric training programs are available online — and often they’re free. So, forget the gas and hotel bill. You can spend an hour online earning continuing education credits or technician certification.

“My staff uses two forms of online training through our Vision Source group and CooperVision,” Dr. Schachet explains. “Vision Source training modules teach my staff how to treat patients with the attitude that they’re the primary reason we exist and that it’s the patient who pays their salaries, not me. The CooperVision training program — which is mandatory for all of our new employees — offers modules to help staff understand what goes on in a contact lens practice, even if they’re already certified technicians. The staff receives the essential tools we want them to have, such as learning some of the technical jargon and the processes we use to fit patients and pro-

Control Costs

By controlling costs on contact lenses, practices can save money and pass that savings along to patients. Jason R. Miller, OD, MBA, partner at EyeCare Professionals of Powell in Powell, Ohio, says that he meets this goal in several ways. First, he shops around for the best prices when it’s time to buy lenses. “There are different buying groups that offer ways to get lower per-box rates,” he explains. “Sometimes it’s an end-of-quarter special, or we may purchase a bank of contact lenses — for example, 100 boxes of a specific lens — and pay a lower price per box up front. When my staff places an order, the lenses come out of that prepaid bank.” This allows his staff to set competitive prices for each box of contact lenses, based on the distributor’s reports about current retail and online market prices.

Order Online

Another way to save your practice money is to order contact lenses online through the manufacturer or distributor instead of spending time ordering them by phone. The lenses will get shipped directly to patients, with no additional cost to the practice.

“Rather than spending time on the phone, repeating my name, address and so on, I can multitask and even answer the phone while I’m ordering online,” says Launa Kind, who’s in charge of ordering contact lenses and other related supplies at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Ore. “It’s so much faster, and I can order all the supplies and trial lenses at once, which means I can combine shipping charges instead of paying a fee for a single box here and there.”

“We’ve been ordering everything online for about 6 years, and we continue to do more as the Web sites become more sophisticated,” Dr. Schachet says.

Advances in technology enable Ms. Kind to scan barcodes on empty blister packs of CooperVision trial lenses, which alerts CooperVision to send her a new lens for the diagnostic fitting set.

Use Web Training

Instead of spending money on transportation, gas and hotel accommodations to attend offsite training, consider doing most, if

MyCooperVision

At MyCooperVision (coopervision.com), more than 28,000 eyecare practitioners use convenient and secure online ordering, including trial lenses and access to account information like shipment tracking, invoice lookup, payment history and product bank balances.



vide the proper instruction for contact lens care. They learn, and we save time and money.”

Perhaps you’re already using some — or all — of these cost-saving measures in your eyecare practice. If not, now is a good time to start. If you and your staff members can save money for the practice, you’ll be doing your part to increase the bottom line now and throughout the new year. ■

How Would You Handle This Challenging Scenario?

Patient Gets Annoyed When She Can't Redeem A Free Trial Lens Coupon After an Eye Exam

Patient Tracy Eckert, a spectacles wearer, walked out of the exam room and approached the reception desk.

"All set?" receptionist Penny Jacobs asked.

"Yep. No new prescription for me this time," Tracy replied, as she searched her purse for the free trial lens coupon she downloaded from the manufacturer's Web site.

"May I have your insurance card?" Penny asked. "Sure," Tracy said, handing it to the receptionist. "Oh here it is," Tracy mumbled, finally finding the coupon. "I have a coupon for free trial contact lenses," Tracy said. "Can I get a pair? I'd like to try them to see if I'd like them. All my friends wear them."

"Well, before you can take advantage of the free trial lens offer,

you'll need to schedule an eye exam and a contact lens fitting," advised technician Sarah Reynolds, who overheard Tracy talking to the receptionist. "But I just had an eye exam," Tracy replied. "Why would I need another one?"

"You won't need another one, but you'll need to schedule an appointment for a fitting," Sarah said.

"This coupon is very misleading, then, because it doesn't say that you need an eye exam and a contact lens fitting," Tracy snapped. "I don't know if my insurance is going to pay for the contact lens fitting. Why offer free lenses when you have to go through so much just to get them?"

If you were Sarah, what would you do or say next?

Julie Rhoades, CPO, LDO, EyeCare Professionals of Powell, Powell, Ohio

I'd say to Tracy, "Great! We'd love for you to wear contact lenses. You'll need to have a few more tests to get a perfect fit for your eyes. Your doctor will want to make sure you're totally successful with your new contact lenses, and one of our technicians will teach you proper insertion and removal techniques. We'll also need to review our contact lens agreement and fees and any questions you have. I can ask the doctor if he's available for a fitting right now, or should I schedule you for a more convenient time?"

When we educate patients in a positive way, they're more comfortable with the fees. We address this issue proactively by informing patients about contact lens fitting fees up front when they schedule their exams. This minimizes surprises and uncomfortable situations at the front desk.

Shanda P., billing specialist, Eyecare Consultants — Vision Source, Englewood Colo.

First, I'd assure Tracy that we can certainly redeem the coupon after the doctor has examined her eyes and fitted her for contact lenses. I'd explain that there are some extra steps involved in an eye exam when you want to wear contact lenses versus eye-glasses. Then, I'd ask her, "When would you like to schedule that appointment?" If she asked about the cost, I'd explain that "the doctor determines a contact lens management fee, which doesn't cover your initial trial pair of lenses or any necessary follow-up

visits. Once you're fitted for the lenses, you'll receive that pair of free trial lenses."

Lois Bighill, vision therapy coordinator, Pacific University College of Optometry, Forest Grove, Ore.

I'd explain to Tracy that the eye exam she just had was for her eyeglasses. The special exam she needs for contact lenses involves a fitting process that will enable the doctor to determine which lenses are best for her eyes. Once the doctor fits her for contact lenses, she'd automatically keep those diagnostic lenses. I'd ask her if she'd like to schedule an appointment for a contact lens fitting or call the office during clinic hours, at which time we'd be happy to assist her.

Rena J., office manager, Eyecare Consultants — Vision Source, Englewood Colo.

I'd explain to Tracy that a contact lens is a medical device that's placed on her eyes, so an eye exam that involves a contact lens fitting is necessary. Once the fitting is completed, a technician will teach her how to insert, remove and care for her contact lenses. In addition, I'd tell her that after the fitting, we'd give her the free diagnostic contact lenses and schedule her for a follow-up visit to ensure the lenses were working well for her. I'd also explain that her doctor will work with her until they're both pleased with the lenses, the visual acuity and comfort. ■