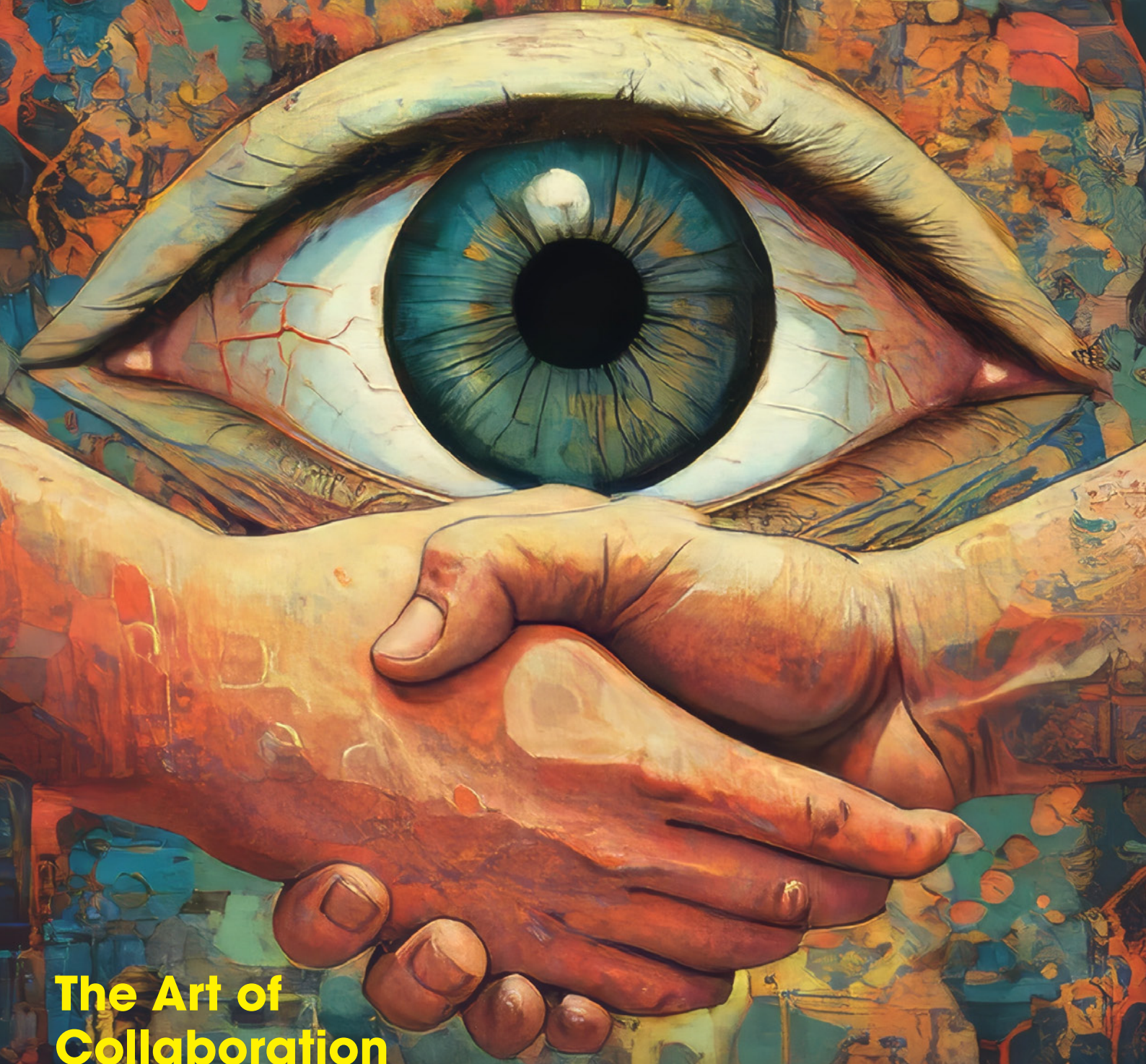


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PRACTICE MANAGEMENT ISSUE
January 2025
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Cool Optometry • Optics • Kudos • Innovation • Enlightenment



The Art of Collaboration

Can shared expertise lead to better vision? Co-management in eye care suggests the answer is yes **p14**



Seeing Eye to Eye

How optometrists and ophthalmologists can patch the vision crisis

Myopia, glaucoma and dry eye syndrome (DED) remain dominant visual conditions that preoccupy eye care practice worldwide. While these conditions have been the subjects of countless conferences, papers and research projects, the need for innovative solutions is critical. The enormity of the challenges they pose will not ease up anytime soon. More needs to be done; other resources need to be tapped.

One such resource that hasn't been sufficiently exploited is cross-disciplinary collaboration—various vision care professions, such as optometry and ophthalmology, coming together to mount a united front on the challenge.

The relationship between these two professions has historically been uneasy, but given our overlapping expertise and shared goals, it's about time we actively collaborated to combat these widespread conditions.

Thankfully, there are signs of progress. For instance, the Optometry Glaucoma Society in the U.S. has suggested that optometrists be involved in residency programs in ocular diseases or join ophthalmology practices specializing in these conditions. The goal is to integrate optometrists more deeply into managing glaucoma, reflecting the need for a more collaborative approach.

Similarly, the International Myopia Institute exemplifies successful interprofessional collaboration, comprising ophthalmologists, optometrists, and other related medical professionals to explore best myopia management practices.

In the Philippines, my organization, the Professional ODs Society, has actively sought collaboration opportunities with local and foreign ophthalmologists. Despite a typhoon hovering over the city, our recent event featuring two leading ophthalmologists from Singapore who discussed strabismus was well attended. This highlights the growing interest in interprofessional dialogue.

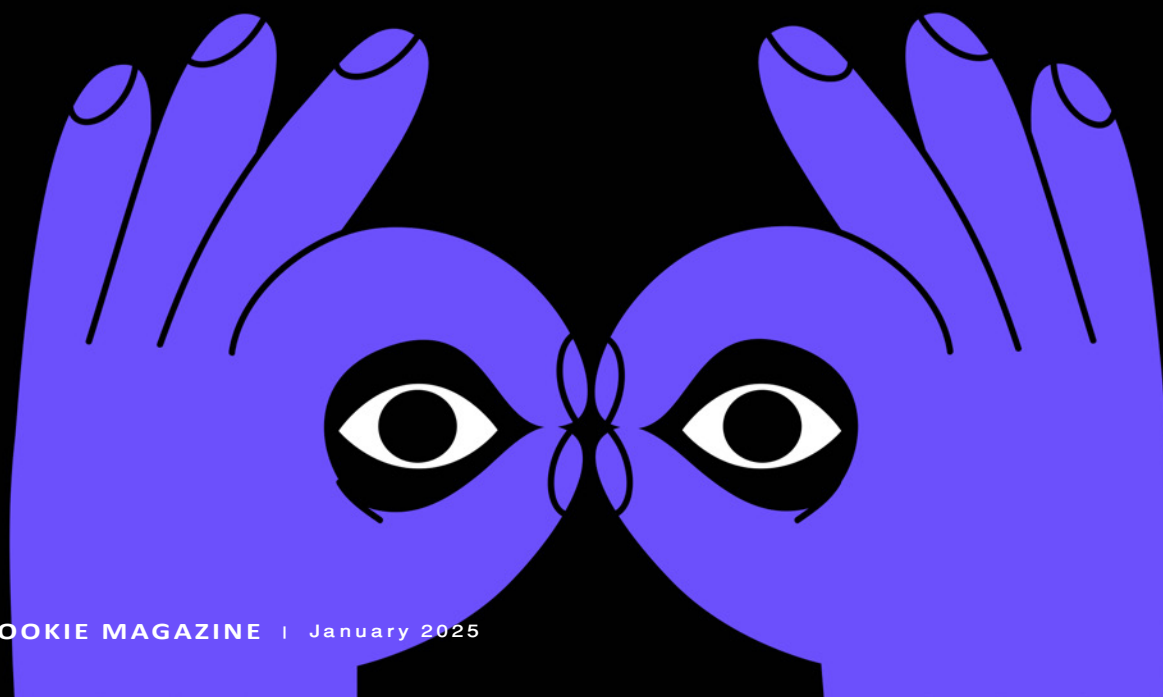
A famous political cartoon quip comes to mind: "I'm glad the leak is not on my side of the boat!" But we're in the same boat. By cultivating stronger relationships and embracing collaborative approaches, we can more effectively address these critical eye health conditions and improve the quality of care for our patients worldwide.

As always, we hope you enjoy this issue!



Best,

Dr. Carmen Abesamis-Dichoso
OD, MAT, FPCO, FIACLE, FBCLA, FAAO





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Advisory Board Members



Dr. Carmen Abesamis-Dichoso

Abesamis Eye Care & Contact Lens
Center, Manila, Philippines

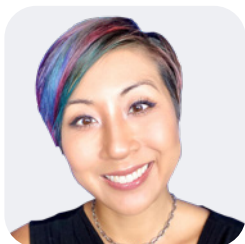
 carmen.dichoso@gmail.com



Dr. Purvi Thomson

OCL Vision
London, United Kingdom

 Purvi@oclvision.com



Dr. Kristie Nguyen

Dr. Feenstra and Associates;
Dr. Kristie Nguyen PLLC, Florida, USA

 kristie817@gmail.com



Dr. Li Lian Foo

Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC)
Singapore

 foo.li.lian@singhealth.com.sg



Dr. Monica Chaudhry

Learn Beyond Vision
New Delhi, India

 monica.rchaudhry@gmail.com



Dr. Maria Sampalis

Sampalis Eyecare
Cranston, Rhode Island, USA

 msampalis@hotmail.com

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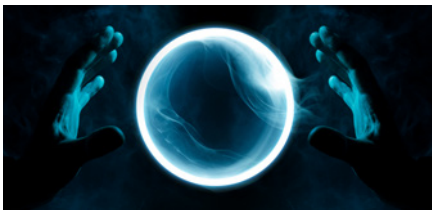


RETFound in Optometry

Dr. Foo Li Lian and Dr. Kristie Nguyen share how this revolutionary tool is poised to redefine the industry

by Tan Sher Lynn

What if a simple eye scan could reveal more than just your eye health? This is the promise of RETFound. By optimizing the power of deep learning and vast datasets of retinal images, RETFound is ushering in a new era of predictive and personalized eye care.



RETFound, an advanced artificial intelligence (AI) model developed by researchers at Moorfields Eye Hospital (UK) and the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology (UK), is empowering clinicians to see more, understand better and care smarter.

This breakthrough tool leverages retinal imaging to detect not only eye diseases but also systemic health risks such as glaucoma, Parkinson's disease and heart attacks. RETFound represents a significant leap in predictive diagnostics, enabling earlier intervention and personalized care.

A 2024 study* showed that the RETFound-enhanced deep learning model significantly improves accuracy and net benefit in community eye disease screening, offering a promising solution for global eye

health challenges, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Decoding the retina's secrets

RETFound is a cutting-edge AI model designed to analyze retinal scans and extract vital health information. Retinal imaging offers a non-invasive view of a patient's vascular and neurological health. By detecting subtle patterns and markers in the retina, RETFound can predict the likelihood of developing severe systemic conditions.

As one of the first AI foundation models in healthcare—and the very first in ophthalmology—it was developed using millions of eye scans from the UK's National Health Service (NHS).

"RETFound demonstrates significant potential in the early detection of glaucoma and other ocular diseases by identifying subtle retinal features that may not be readily apparent, even to trained professionals during fundus examinations," said Dr. Foo Li Lian, a consultant with the Cataract and Comprehensive Ophthalmology Department at the Singapore National Eye Centre. "This capability could enable earlier interventions, which are crucial for conditions like glaucoma, where vision loss is irreversible and, if left undiagnosed, could eventually lead to blindness."

The retina often reflects systemic health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, and neurodegenerative diseases. "AI models like RETFound enhance early detection by identifying diagnostic markers on retinal images. This advancement positions eye care professionals as key contributors to systemic disease diagnosis and screening, facilitating timely interventions and improving overall health outcomes," she added.

"With the sheer amount of data RETFound analyzes to understand ocular pathology and its connection to systemic health, diagnostics can only benefit from this technology," emphasized Dr. Kristie Nguyen, a board-certified optometrist

from Florida, USA. "By comparing numerous images in its database, it will greatly assist clinicians in detecting early changes in systemic diseases during routine eye exams."

Clinical implications in optometry

The integration of AI technologies like RETFound is poised to redefine the role of optometry, transitioning it from reactive care to a more predictive, preventative and personalized approach.

These advancements not only promise to enhance patient outcomes but also position optometry as a key player in holistic healthcare delivery.

"These technologies could broaden the scope of optometry, enabling practitioners to address both ocular and systemic health issues, thus positioning the profession as a vital component of holistic healthcare delivery," said Dr. Foo.

A significant advantage of AI tools lies in their ability to streamline patient management. "AI tools hold great promise in reducing the referral burden by enabling optometrists to triage cases more effectively, ensuring that only patients requiring specialist attention are referred," Dr. Foo explained. "However, the accuracy and sensitivity of these tools must be robust to prevent over-reliance or under-referral."

Dr. Foo further emphasized the importance of equipping optometrists to maximize the potential of AI tools like RETFound.

"Optometrists will play a critical role in adopting RETFound, converting AI-generated insights into impactful patient care. As AI technologies like RETFound become increasingly integrated into clinical practice, optometrists will need to develop a thorough understanding of the technology, allowing them to confidently interpret AI findings and assess their clinical relevance," she explained. "Beyond interpreting AI outputs, optometrists will also be tasked with effectively communicating



these results to patients and ensuring timely referrals to other healthcare providers when necessary.”

Revolutionizing patient care and engagement

Highlighting the impact of RETFound in patient care, Dr. Nguyen remarked: “I think it will be a step in the right direction to offer optometrists more options in better patient care and management. Allowing patients to compare themselves to the population with a suggested prognosis/diagnosis could boost morale when it comes to treatment.”

Echoing this perspective, Dr. Foo elaborated on how RETFound enhances patient engagement.

“RETFound has the potential to revolutionize patient care by providing clear, data-driven insights into a person’s health, helping them better understand their condition,” she said. “However, building patient trust requires transparency—patients need to know how AI contributes to diagnoses and care decisions. It’s essential to address concerns about accuracy, as well as the risks of false positives or negatives, which could lead to over-referrals or missed diagnoses. Clear communication and patient education are crucial to fostering confidence in AI-driven tools.”

Hurdles and learning curves

Dr. Foo also acknowledged the challenges of integrating RETFound into optometry practices.

“Incorporating RETFound presents several hurdles,” she noted. “First, significant investment in advanced imaging equipment will be necessary to generate high-quality retinal images suitable for AI analysis. Additionally, comprehensive upskilling and the establishment of standardized protocols will be essential for optometrists to accurately interpret AI outputs and ensure timely referrals to appropriate healthcare providers. Seamless integration into existing workflows

will also be needed to minimize disruptions to practice operations. Addressing these challenges is crucial to fully realizing RETFound’s potential in enhancing patient care,” she explained.

Dr. Nguyen added, “There may be learning curves in using the software. But with time, practice will make it easier to adapt. Continuing to expand the database is also important to capture a wider variety of presentations and scenarios, demonstrating how systemic health can affect the eyes and predicting future outcomes,” she said.

A new era of predictive healthcare

Despite these challenges, RETFound represents a significant advancement in optometry, transforming how eye care professionals diagnose and manage both ocular and systemic health holistically.

With continued innovation, education and integration, RETFound promises not only to elevate the role of optometry but also to lead us into a new era of predictive and personalized medicine. 🧐

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Contributors



Dr. Foo Li Lian is a consultant at the Cataract and Comprehensive Ophthalmology Department, Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC). She graduated with First Class Honors in Chemical Engineering from NUS in 2008 and earned her MD from Duke-NUS in 2012. She became a Fellow of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists in 2016 and attained a Master of Medicine in Ophthalmology and a Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine in 2017. An accomplished researcher and author, Dr. Foo has published nine peer-reviewed papers, presented at international conferences and co-authored two ophthalmology guidebooks. She received the Young Investigator Award at SGH’s Annual Scientific Meeting in 2011. Dr. Foo’s passion for innovation led her to the MIT-Harvard Medical School Healthcare Innovation Bootcamp in 2019, where her team was runner-up in the elevator pitch competition. She also completed the Eureka-Singapore Monsoon School on Translational Medicine. As SNEC’s first Myopia Fellow, Dr. Foo is dedicated to addressing the myopia epidemic through innovative solutions. With a vision to enhance clinical care, she strives to develop novel tools and treatments, bridging gaps in ophthalmology and improving patient outcomes.

 foo.li.lian@singhealth.com.sg



Dr. Kristie Nguyen is a board-certified optometrist. She currently owns and practices in her own clinic, Dr. Kristie Nguyen PLLC, in Winter Park, Florida. After graduating in the top 10 of her high school class with honors, she went on to obtain her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Houston, Texas. While at U of H, she volunteered at a local hospital and worked as an optometric assistant. Dr. Nguyen obtained a Doctorate of Optometry (O.D.) in 2005 from Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She conducted her medical internships at the Chickasaw Nation Health Clinic in Ardmore, Oklahoma and the Lake Mary Eye Care in Lake Mary, Florida. Dr. Nguyen is a member of the American Optometric Association, the Florida Optometric Association, Young ODs of America, OD Divas, Optometry Divas and the Central Florida Optometric Society. In addition, she is also a brand ambassador for different eyewear brands such as Kazoku Lunettes, KUWARE and RYAN ADDA. Dr. Nguyen is married and has two beautiful daughters. She enjoys going to the beach, hanging out at Disney, and reading.

 kristie817@gmail.com



Beyond Eye Drops

Smart contact lenses are set to revolutionize glaucoma management with a proactive approach to monitoring and treatment

by Hazlin Hassan

As we enter 2025, the world of glaucoma management is becoming sleeker, smarter and more efficient. The advent of smart contact lenses is just the tip of the iceberg in what's likely to overhaul glaucoma care. For patients, the promise of real-time monitoring, personalized treatment plans and improved adherence will make managing glaucoma much easier—and far less stressful.

This year, glaucoma management is bringing a whole new level of tech-savvy swag to the game. Forget about old-school eye drops, cumbersome doctor's visits and constant worrying about intraocular pressure (IOP)—the future is here and it's wrapped up in smart contact lenses.

These lenses are reinventing the way glaucoma is diagnosed, monitored and treated—all while delivering real-time data that could save one's vision.

Let's dive into the world of these high-tech eye savers and see what's in the works for glaucoma management in 2025.

Tracking IOP 24/7

First things first—glaucoma is a sneaky villain. It often has no obvious symptoms until significant damage has been done. But what if we could track it 24/7, even while you're sleeping? That's where diagnostic smart contact lenses come into play.

Sensimed Triggerfish (Sensimed AG; Vaud, Switzerland) is one of the players in the field. This bad boy uses a strain gauge sensor to detect the tiniest changes in the curvature of the eye, which correlates with fluctuations in IOP. And the best part? It works continuously over a full 24-hour period.

"Monitoring IOP fluctuations over 24 hours helps in understanding how IOP changes throughout the day, offering valuable data for early detection and management," explained Dr. Low Jin Rong, a consultant in the Glaucoma Department at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC).

While IOP measurement by the Goldmann tonometer is considered the gold standard, Prof. Norshamsiah Mohd Din, professor of ophthalmology at the National University Malaysia Medical Center, noted: "24-hour IOP measurement has been shown to fluctuate over time."

"Monitoring IOP fluctuations over 24 hours helps in understanding how IOP changes throughout the day, offering valuable data for early detection and management."

- Dr. Low Jin Rong

Research indicates that Triggerfish recordings correlate better with visual field progression than multiple in-clinic IOP measurements using the Goldmann tonometer in the clinic.^{1,2}

Patients who recorded steep spikes overnight and a higher number of peaks overall belonged to the fast disease progression group, Prof. Norshamsiah added.

These lenses, therefore, can be used to stratify patients at risk of future functional visual field loss. This level of continuous monitoring isn't just a game-changer for clinicians; it's a

gift for patients who no longer have to rely on periodic, office-based IOP measurements. By tracking these fluctuations in real time, doctors can adjust treatment plans faster and more accurately, leading to better outcomes.

Real-time IOP data at your fingertips

But hold your horses. Researchers have also developed smart contact lenses to measure IOP accurately despite variations in the eye's temperature, which make accurate readings tricky.

One such design is the intelligent wireless measuring contact lens (WMCL) by Dengbao Xiao with the Institute of Advanced Structure Technology, Beijing Institute of Technology, and colleagues. Lab tests showed that it reduced temperature-related errors, providing IOP readings with only a 7% deviation from true values, even across a wide temperature range.³

It doesn't stop there. The WMCLs can also send the data wirelessly to a doctor's office or phone. Imagine, no more waiting around for appointments or invasive procedures. With these lenses, doctors have continuous access to a patient's IOP data, which means they can react immediately if something's off.

"These lenses feature temperature-compensated sensors for precise IOP measurement over time, enabling continuous real-time feedback to both patients and clinicians, reducing the need for multiple visits to the doctor for IOP checks," noted Dr. Low.

Passive sensors for IOP monitoring

Academics from the United Kingdom and Turkey have also developed an electrically passive sensor embedded in disposable contact lenses that can detect changes in IOP over several hours, sending the collected data wirelessly.⁴

Tested on six volunteers, this system successfully measured IOP

fluctuations after inducing pressure changes, such as by drinking water and lying flat. Unlike previous lenses that used bulky silicon chips, this design is more comfortable and flexible for daily wear.

But that's not all. According to Dr. Low, some biosensor-integrated lenses take it a step further by detecting biochemical markers in tears, such as matrix metalloproteinases, which are indicative of early glaucoma.

"These sensors provide a non-invasive and continuous method to monitor disease progression, which is crucial given that glaucoma often develops without obvious symptoms until significant damage has occurred," he added.

Super lenses that do it all

This next innovation is straight-up futuristic: Theranostic lenses. These super-lenses do it all. Not only do they monitor IOP and other eye biomarkers, but they also deliver medication right to the eye as needed.

These all-in-one solutions are perfect for people who need continuous monitoring and quick intervention when their IOP spikes. "This integrated system ensures continuous monitoring and precise medication administration, helping to keep IOP at optimal levels for better glaucoma control," said Dr. Low.

What does this mean for the patient? It's all about ease and precision. You get constant tracking of your eye health, and whenever your IOP rises to a dangerous level, the lens kicks into action, releasing medication to keep things in check. It's almost like having a built-in eye doctor right inside your lens.

Prof. Norshamsiah highlighted the work of Pohang University of Science and Technology, South Korea, where researchers have developed a smart lens with both IOP sensors and drug delivery systems, providing on-demand medication release to keep IOP under control.⁵



Researchers in China have also developed a contact lens that monitors real-time IOP, with an IOP sensor and a wireless transfer power circuit sandwiched between upper and lower contact lenses, allowing the lens to function without wires or batteries.⁶

"When the pressure reaches a high-risk threshold, a drug delivery module in the contact lens can apply an anti-glaucoma drug to the eye as needed," said Prof. Norshamsiah.

Some questions she raised include whether there is enough space to contain these intricate wireless systems within a thin lens and still be comfortable enough to be worn by patients.

"Attention should also be given to ensure that the circuit chip within the lens will not cause inadvertent electrical flow into the tear film and subsequent burn to ocular tissue. Furthermore, incorporating a drug depot to be released in response to increased IOP requires careful design," she said.

The future is bright and contact-lens-shaped

With all the innovations in diagnostic, therapeutic and theranostic lenses, we can look forward to a future where glaucoma is no longer an invisible enemy, but one that can be caught and controlled with the click of a button—or more accurately, the blink of an eye.

As Dr. Low put it, "Smart contact lenses with diagnostic and therapeutic capabilities represent a significant leap forward in the way glaucoma is managed. While still in the development and clinical trial stages, the potential for these innovations to revolutionize glaucoma care is immense," he added.

However, there may yet be hurdles. "While all these innovations show promising developments in glaucoma management, the challenges of applying a contact lens on the cornea for a long period still exist, akin to the challenges of contact lens wear for all other situations," cautioned Prof.

Norshamsiah. There remains the risk of corneal infection, corneal abrasion and chronic corneal hypoxia.

Furthermore, the inclusion of circuit chips in wearable tonometers often makes lenses thicker and less comfortable. To address this unmet need, Purdue University researchers have developed smart contact lenses using "sticktronics," which are sticker-like items containing electronics or smart tech.⁷ This wearable biomedical device can continuously unobtrusively monitor IOP, even during sleep. These lenses aim to improve patient comfort and enable 24-hour IOP tracking.

As more advancements are made, it's clear that smart contact lenses could play a pivotal role in reshaping glaucoma management, offering a more seamless, comfortable, and efficient approach to eye care. 🧐

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Contributors

Dr. Low Jin Rong is a consultant in the Glaucoma Department at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) and a clinical assistant professor at Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore. He completed his training through the SingHealth Ophthalmology Residency Program and SNEC Glaucoma Fellowship, with fellowships from the Royal College of Ophthalmologists (UK) and the Academy of Medicine, Singapore. Dr. Low is the clinical lead for Minimally Invasive Glaucoma Surgery (MIGS) at SNEC, where he developed MIGS guidelines and is actively involved in MIGS research. A passionate educator, he has spearheaded innovations in ophthalmology education, research, and quality improvement, including winning the SingHealth Award for Quality Improvement (2017). An active researcher and speaker at global conferences, Dr. Low's work focuses on improving outcomes in glaucoma surgery, with his contributions recognized by The Japanese Ophthalmological Society International Young Investigator Award (2021).

low.jin.rong@singhealth.com.sg



Prof. Norshamsiah Mohd Din is a consultant ophthalmologist and glaucoma specialist in the Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Kebangsaan, Malaysia. She received her ophthalmology training from the National University of Malaysia in 2007 and obtained a PhD from the University College London in 2014. She was also a clinical and research fellow at Moorfields Eye Hospital in uveitis and glaucoma from 2010 to 2013. Prof. Norshamsiah has more than 80 journal article publications under her name and is actively conducting research in glaucoma and uveitis. Her research interests are in the management of secondary glaucoma, minimally invasive glaucoma surgery, and glaucoma imaging.

nsd@ppukm.ukm.edu.my



A Woman of Vision

Dr. Purvi Thomson is more than just a highly skilled optometrist—she's a leader, a mother and an inspiration

by Chow Ee-Tan

From managing a bustling practice to contributing to refractive standards and motivating colleagues, Dr. Purvi Thomson is dedicated to advancing eye care. Her journey, marked by professional triumphs and personal challenges, showcases the power of passion, vision and the importance of a balanced life.

Balancing a fulfilling career with a rich family life is rare these days, but Dr. Purvi Thomson feels fortunate to have achieved it. "The health and eye care industry is phenomenal, and those around me motivate and inspire me to be the best optometrist I can be," shared Dr. Purvi, head optometrist at OCL Vision London in the United Kingdom.

The power of co-management

With a team of consultant ophthalmologists, OCL Vision London offers various eye care services—from laser vision correction to corneal and retinal procedures.

According to Dr. Purvi, the ophthalmologists she works with are the biggest champions of optometrists, and she feels lucky to be working alongside them. With a team of 10 optometrists, they work together to offer their patients the



best possible eye care solutions as they undertake pre-operative consultations for corneal, cataract and refractive surgeries, as well as independently managing follow-ups.

"For the past 10 years, I have worked with some of the best eye surgeons and have developed skills that allow me to work synergistically alongside them," shared Dr. Purvi. "I take a great interest in the ocular surface disease, cataract pre- and post-op management, refractive surgery including laser vision correction, keratoconus monitoring and management, and specialist contact lenses," she added.

"For the past 10 years, I have worked with some of the best eye surgeons and have developed skills that allow me to work synergistically alongside them."

Charting a career path in eye care

Dr. Purvi qualified as an optometrist in 2004 and started working as a locum before becoming a resident optometrist. "I was then given the opportunity to manage and run my uncle's independent practice. I did that for a few years before I realized that I was drawn more to working in a clinical setting," she shared. "So about 18 years ago, I moved on to work in ophthalmology and haven't looked back since."

Over the years, she continued to develop her clinical knowledge and became an independent prescriber. She also completed further education in glaucoma.

"I faced an incredibly steep learning curve when I stepped into the world of ophthalmology," she said. "But sometimes you do your best work under pressure. I learned pretty quickly and evolved to think like a surgeon while practicing what I do best—optometry," she added.

With a career that has taken various paths, Dr. Purvi believes that each step has made her a better practitioner.

"Working in multiple primary care definitely enhanced my refractive skills and ability to deal with different patients. Running my own practice taught me the importance of patient care, as well as balancing the business side of optometry," she added.

Bridging private practice and hospital care

OCL Vision runs a dry eye clinic where Dr. Purvi and her team offer treatments such as intense pulse light (IPL) therapy. Part of their administrative tasks include carrying out calculations for intraocular lenses (IOLs) to help deliver the best possible outcomes for their patients.

For Dr. Purvi, motivating and empowering her team of optometrists to advance their expertise independently is an important aspect of her leadership role.

"For example, a few of us will be training to carry out YAG laser capsulotomies. Simultaneously, I work within the business to help develop pathways to maximize efficiencies and drive business by developing connections with community practitioners," she shared.

Dr. Purvi's experience in working both in private practice and the hospital industry plays a key role in her career.

"Working in the private sector gives me access to the latest technology and procedures, such as the newest IOLs, treatments for keratoconus (KC), as well as the chance to play with the latest tech. It also gives me insight into the business side of ophthalmology and how a healthcare setting is run," she explained.

Educating and empowering peers

The United Kingdom National Health Service (NHS) also provided her with opportunities to use her sight-saving skills. "We can offer patients a better

quality of life with specialist contact lenses," she shared. "Seeing their reaction when they can finally see is something I will never take for granted.

Dr. Purvi's passion for education leads her to speaking engagements at ophthalmology and optometry meetings, sharing knowledge and learning from peers. She also contributes her expertise to the field as an advisory board member for COOKIE Magazine and as the College of Optometrist's representative on the Royal College of Ophthalmologists Refractive Standards Working Group.

"What I have learned is that all these roles in my career allow me to fully enjoy what I do," she shared. "Each element of my work allows me to be the best possible optometrist. The clinical aspect is what drives me, and I love being in the test room helping patients with whatever they may need from a visual point of view," she enthused.

A source of inspiration and support

Dr. Purvi credits her family—her husband and parents—as her biggest motivators. "They always encourage me to take up new opportunities. Having their full support enables me to take my career to where it is now," she shared.

"Having young children forces you to maintain a work and home balance. One could say that my full-time work is at home trying to raise two strong, independent young women."

Dr. Purvi's decision to become an optometrist was influenced by her father, a successful optometrist who had an independent practice. Her father was among the first to invest in a fundus camera. Being able to see the back of the eye and directly view the blood vessels fascinated



young Dr. Purvi, inspiring her to follow in her father's footsteps.

"During my school holidays, I would often go and help him. I would work as his receptionist, assist people in choosing their glasses, and help with stock-taking and general administrative work. I got to 'play' with all his latest gadgets," she fondly reminisced.

Dr. Purvi met her husband, Jamie, in a London house share 20 years ago. They've been married for 16 years. "He is the least scientific person I have ever met, but he is definitely the smartest when it comes to numbers," she shared. "We have two strong, brilliant and kind daughters, ages 11 and seven. They occasionally like to challenge their mother," she laughed.

"Having young children forces you to maintain a work and home balance. One could say that my full-time work is at home trying to raise two strong, independent young women," Dr. Purvi shared. "When I go out to see my patients, that is 'my' time—the aspect of my life that is purely for me. Having my girls definitely helps me keep perspective and enjoy what I do," she said.

Needless to say, Dr. Purvi is a strong advocate for women balancing leadership careers and motherhood.

A journey of strength and vision

Eleven years ago, she underwent chemotherapy for cancer, benefitting from the excellent healthcare services in the UK.

"Life throws challenges our way, and we can always learn and grow from them," Dr. Purvi shared. "I work alongside incredible women and surgeons, and I always get inspired to see people I can relate to achieve so much. It's a real driving force for me."

While chemotherapy can save one's life, it can have a devastating impact on one's health. Dr. Purvi, who is now a member of various cancer groups, became a voice of help for women who suffer from incredibly sore eyes due to the effects of chemotherapy

In 2025, she aims to create eye care boxes containing information booklets on simple remedies to alleviate eye discomfort for those in need. "It's been a plan for a while, and I hope that with some help from the industry, I can fulfill these plans in 2025," she concluded. 🍷



Contributor

Dr. Purvi Thomson is a specialist optometrist who, since qualifying in 2004, has gained vast experience in various sectors of optometry. For seven years, she worked in and managed a high-street practice before transitioning to the hospital sector. She is the head of optometry at OCL Vision. Dr. Purvi has specific training and expertise in working with patients who require vision correction, such as laser eye surgery or refractive lens exchange. In 2020, she earned her independent prescribing qualification. She has a keen interest in ocular surface disease and has established a successful dry eye clinic at her current workplace, where she specializes in patient education and offers treatments for mild to severe dry eye. She also works in the contact lens department at the Luton and Dunstable NHS Hospital, fitting specialist contact lenses.

 purvi@oclvision.com



The Art of Collaboration

Can shared expertise lead to better vision? Co-management in eye care suggests the answer is yes

by Diana Truong

Co-management in eye care represents a powerful shift towards collaborative practice, where optometrists and ophthalmologists work together to better address patients' diverse needs. This approach prioritizes shared responsibility and open communication to optimize patient outcomes, particularly for conditions such as myopia and glaucoma.

It started with a text message. "Hey, Rajen, this is a patient of mine." The optometrist explained the situation—a patient on critical mental health medication that could potentially trigger narrow-angle glaucoma. Despite the risks, the medication was essential for the patient's well-being. Stopping it wasn't an option; nor was ignoring the possible danger to their vision.

Dr. Rajen Desai, a cataract and glaucoma surgeon with Precision Eye Partners in New Jersey, USA, got the text and sprang into action. He saw the patient the very next day, examined their eyes on and off the medication, and determined that their ocular health was unaffected by the treatment.



The optometrist, psychiatrist and Dr. Desai collaborated seamlessly, ensuring the patient's vision, mental health and overall quality of life were protected.

"It was a great way for a patient to keep not just their sight but their sanity, their life and their livelihood as well," Dr. Desai reflected. "This wasn't just about treating the eyes—it was about treating a human being."

This scenario encapsulates the very essence of co-management: A patient-centric approach where optometrists and ophthalmologists join forces, blending their expertise to deliver holistic care. It's a collaboration built on trust, communication and a shared commitment to doing what's best for the patient.

For optometrists, co-management often means balancing the art of knowing your patient's personal story with the science of knowing when to call on a specialist. It requires not only clinical expertise but also the ability to act as a bridge between patients and the wider medical team.

Dr. Desai's case is far from unique, but it serves as a powerful reminder of what's possible when providers set aside silos and focus on the bigger picture.

"Co-management isn't about losing autonomy," he emphasized. "It's about leveraging each other's strengths to provide better care."

Co-management in a nutshell

At its core, co-management is about collaboration—a shared responsibility between optometrists and ophthalmologists to provide comprehensive care tailored to the patient's unique needs. The goal is clear: Optimize outcomes by combining expertise, defining roles and maintaining open lines of communication.

But what does this look like in practice? Imagine a patient with keratoconus, a condition requiring both medical intervention and specialty vision correction.

"When I have a patient referred to me for scleral lenses, I make sure that we're also addressing the main problem—keratoconus—which can be managed with cross-linking," explained Dr. Glenda Aleman-Moheeputh, president and CEO of OK Love Myopia Control Experts in Florida, USA.

"So, I refer the patient to Dr. William Trattler (a refractive, corneal and cataract surgeon) for cross-linking. And vice versa: If he treats a patient for keratoconus and they need vision correction, he refers them to me for specialty contact lenses," she said.

This kind of reciprocal relationship not only benefits the patient but also strengthens professional networks. Each provider understands their role—Dr. Trattler handles the stabilization of the disease, while Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh focuses on restoring functional vision.

For complex conditions like keratoconus, glaucoma or post-surgical recovery, co-management isn't just a convenience—it's a necessity. By working together, optometrists and ophthalmologists can ensure continuity of care, tackle multifaceted challenges and, most importantly, prioritize the patient's well-being.

"When done right, co-management is seamless," noted Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh. "It's not just about solving a problem. It's about treating the whole person."

A new era of collaboration

The relationship between optometrists and ophthalmologists has come a long way from its polarized origins. Decades ago, the two professions often operated in isolation, with little interaction and even less collaboration.

"When I first moved to the US, it was polar opposites. Optometry was looked down upon," reflected Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh, highlighting the stark divide that once defined the field.

But times are changing. Today, the increasing demand for eye care, advancements in technology and shifts in legislation have pushed the two professions toward a more integrated approach to patient care.

Key milestones have paved the way for this evolution. The introduction of protocols, such as the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery co-management guidelines, established a framework for shared care models.*

More recently, legislative wins have expanded the scope of optometric practice in several states in the U.S., allowing optometrists to perform minor procedures and prescribe a broader range of medications. These changes not only improve access to care but also reinforce optometry's role as a primary access point for patients.

Technology has further fueled this collaboration. Tools like optical coherence tomography (OCT) and advanced diagnostic imaging empower optometrists to detect and monitor conditions earlier and more accurately, opening new doors for cooperative care. Coupled with an aging population and rising rates of diabetes and myopia, the need for efficient, collaborative care models has never been greater.

In South Florida, the movement has gained notable momentum, thanks to trailblazers like Dr. Diana Shechtman. "She's been a huge advocate for collaborative care," said Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh. "She's been proactively hosting events where optometry and ophthalmology are all in the same room." These gatherings are more than symbolic gestures; they serve as platforms to build trust, exchange knowledge and strengthen the partnerships needed for effective co-management.



Building that trust, however, requires effort. “The best ophthalmologists are progressive and recognize optometry’s role as primary care providers,” Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh explained. But trust isn’t given—it’s earned. “For ophthalmologists to trust you, they need to know you are practicing science-based medicine,” she explained. “It’s about staying informed, communicating clearly and demonstrating expertise.”

This evolving relationship between optometrists and ophthalmologists isn’t just a professional shift—it’s a reflection of a broader cultural change within eye care. By prioritizing collaboration over competition and patient outcomes over individual egos, the two professions are unlocking a new potential for improved care.

Transforming myopia management

Myopia management stands out as an area ripe for collaboration between optometrists and ophthalmologists. As global cases of myopia surge, the stakes for early intervention and long-term care have never been higher. Co-management offers not only the chance to preserve vision but also to enhance patients’ overall quality of life.

Optometrists’ accessibility and patient-facing roles position them as the first line of defense in managing myopia. Beyond just diagnosing refractive errors, optometrists serve as educators, helping patients and their families understand the long-term risks of myopia progression.

“Optometrists have a unique opportunity to change the trajectory of conditions like myopia through early intervention and patient education. It’s a powerful responsibility,” noted Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh.

At the heart of successful co-management lies a stepwise, collaborative approach. Optometrists lead the charge by diagnosing myopia

early, implementing treatments such as orthokeratology or atropine drops, and closely monitoring axial length. When a patient reaches critical milestones—like two years of stable axial growth or the emergence of retinal complications—ophthalmologists step in to provide advanced care.

“Once we have two years of stable axial length and stable refractive error, we revisit, and I would send the patient for a consultation for refractive surgery,” explained Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh. This continuity of care ensures patients receive the right intervention at precisely the right moments.

Effective co-management also hinges on seamless communication between providers, particularly for high-myopia patients who are at elevated risk for retinal pathology. Annual referrals to retina specialists are essential.

“We need to send them to the retina specialist at least once a year so they can make sure that the health of the retina is intact,” Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh advised.

Real-world scenarios underscore the importance of this proactive strategy. “I had a patient who was very highly myopic. He came in for a follow-up, and I just had a feeling that day, intuition,” Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh shared. “He was not due for a dilation but that day something told me to dilate him. And I saw one retina hole. I immediately coordinated with a retina specialist,” she continued. The swift action helped the patient avoid potentially devastating vision loss.

As myopic patients near the end of their treatment journey, conversations around refractive surgery often take center stage. Here, close collaboration between optometrists and ophthalmologists becomes crucial.

“We plan one year before a patient ends their myopia management. We start the conversation... and I work very closely [with the

ophthalmologist],” said Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh.

For many, early refractive surgery can be life-changing. “The reason why I advocate for refractive surgery is because, in the end, it’s what’s best for the patient...having refractive surgery early gives them quality of life,” she emphasized.

Co-managing glaucoma

Managing glaucoma is often likened to a marathon—a relentless, long-term effort requiring meticulous monitoring and timely interventions. Optometrists typically serve at the front lines, detecting glaucoma through monitoring intraocular pressure (IOP) and conducting visual field tests. However, a frequent pitfall in co-management lies in delaying referrals for advanced intervention.

“A common mistake is not referring a patient soon enough,” Dr. Desai said. “Unfortunately, patients come to me too late, often at a severe stage of the disease. We often wait until the patient functionally loses their vision before we send them to a glaucoma specialist,” he explained. “It would have been nice to cut that little nodule out when it was the size of a peanut a year ago, five years ago or 10 years ago.”

In his talks with optometrists, Dr. Desai often uses a striking analogy to drive home the urgency of early surgical intervention. “If someone had lung cancer and the tumor was growing, you wouldn’t keep trying different chemotherapies while the tumor spreads. You’d consider surgery early on,” he said. “We need to think about glaucoma the same way—intervene early to prevent suffering, costs and permanent vision loss.”

The evolving paradigm of interventional glaucoma has opened new opportunities for collaborative care. This approach allows optometrists and glaucoma specialists to work hand-in-hand, ensuring continuity of care while leveraging each other’s strengths.



"When I perform surgery, I see the patient postoperatively to ensure they're stable," Dr. Desai shared. "Once they're good, I send them back to the optometrist for long-term care. They'll monitor the patient, check the pressure and send the patient back to me if another intervention is needed. It works very well together."

The key to successful glaucoma management lies in mutual trust, open communication and shared responsibility. For optometrists, understanding when to refer and maintaining ongoing dialogue with specialists can make all the difference in patient outcomes.

"The goal is to get patients off the cycle of drops and suffering and into a stable, manageable condition," Dr. Desai concluded. "And that's something optometrists and ophthalmologists can achieve together."

A win-win for all

As the demand for eye care services continues to grow, the need for optometry and ophthalmology to work hand-in-hand has never been greater. Through collaboration, these professions can achieve faster diagnoses, improved patient outcomes and a more streamlined approach to care—setting a new gold standard for interdisciplinary partnership.

"We must advocate and promote collaborative care. Ultimately, it enables us to provide the best patient care," Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh noted. This ethos is a call to action for optometrists to embrace co-management not as an obligation but as an opportunity to elevate the care they provide.

By working together, optometrists and ophthalmologists can address the growing prevalence of chronic conditions like myopia and glaucoma while also meeting the rising expectations of patients seeking

comprehensive and personalized care.

"Patients receive the best care, and practitioners can rely on each other's expertise. It's a win-win situation," Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh emphasized.

This partnership is more than just about efficiency—it's about creating a shared vision for the future of eye care. With advancements in technology and an ever-expanding scope of practice, optometrists

are uniquely positioned to play a central role in co-management models that benefit both patients and providers.

As the field of eye care evolves, so too must its leaders. The potential for co-management to redefine patient care is boundless, but it requires a unified effort to make it a reality. The future of eye care isn't just about seeing clearly—it's about working together to create a vision for all. 🌟

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With over 20 years of experience in the optometry field, **Dr. Glenda Aleman-**

Moheeputh is a vision expert. She graduated from Nova Southeastern University in Florida, USA, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Vision Science. She went on to receive her Doctor of Optometry degree from NSU's College of Optometry in which she led the class of 2017 as vice president. Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh is certified to practice optometry in Florida with a certification in orthokeratology and scleral lens fitting specializing in Paragon CRT, Contex OK lens, GOV Ortho-K lens, Euclid Emerald lens, Europa lens, and Zen lens. She currently serves as the president of the American Academy of Myopia Control and Orthokeratology (AAOMC) South Florida Chapter. She also holds the position of lead ambassador for the Optometry Divas Miami Chapter and acts on the Chair Advisory Committee of the Broward College Opticianry program. Presently, Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh is an acting optometrist and business owner, managing her own private practice, iSmart Vision Care. She performs comprehensive eye exams, specializes in treating corneal disease and myopia control, and has a specialty contact lens clinic. In her mission to stop the myopia epidemic, Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh has recently launched her new venture, OK Love Myopia Control Experts (www.orthoklove.com), designed to educate and consult fellow optometrists about myopia control treatments.

 gmoheep@gmail.com



Contributors

Dr. Rajen Desai, MD, FACS, is a board-certified cataract and glaucoma surgeon with Precision Eye Partners in New Jersey, USA, a referral-only surgical practice. Dr. Desai graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Stanford University, followed by an MD from Stanford Medical School, with an extra year of training in clinical research. He served as 2nd Lieutenant and pilot in the US Air Force Auxiliary Civil Air Patrol in Texas, followed by residency and a Heed Foundation Fellowship in glaucoma at Northwestern University. Dr. Desai produced over 50 peer-reviewed publications and presentations across the country. Optometrists often refer their patients to Dr. Desai for them to receive the most advanced surgical options, as he was the first in his region to operate using the iStent Inject, the Ahmed ClearPath tube shunt, the Streamline canaloplasty device, the Envy intraocular lens, the iDose travoprost implant, and the AlloFlo glaucoma device.

 rajen.u.desai@gmail.com



Outsmarting Myopia

From smart glasses to personalized eye drops, myopia management in 2025 promises better patient outcomes

by Hazlin Hassan

We've come a long way from the old-school glasses and contacts. While those still have their place, the future of myopia management is all about precision, personalization and some seriously cool tech.

It's widely recognized that myopia is on the rise, especially in the digital age. But fear not! As we zoom into 2025, let's dive into the newest developments in myopia care and how they'll team up like never before to fight this vision villain.

The next big leap in myopia treatment is going to be a mix of cutting-edge technology and pharmacology. Let's break it down, shall we?

The future is here, and it's in your glasses

Picture this: Glasses that don't just correct vision but actually help manage myopia by monitoring and modifying myopia-related behavior in patients.

The Visual Environment Evaluation Tool (VEET; Meta Reality Labs Research; Washington, USA) is a

wearable device that measures light exposure and working distance.¹ Mounted on spectacles, it provides real-time data on visual behaviors. Meta Reality Labs Research has partnered with the American Optometric Foundation to fund new studies using VEET.

Another innovation, the Clouclip (ClouClip; Zhejiang, China) is a device that clips onto children's glasses to track their reading habits and lighting conditions, giving real-time feedback and alerting wearers to adjust their reading distance.²

Old-school with a 2025 twist

Orthokeratology (Ortho-K) lenses and Myopia Control Soft Contact Lenses (MCSCSLs) continue to evolve—and by 2025, they're expected to be even more effective at slowing down that pesky axial elongation that causes myopia.

"Ortho-K lenses, myopia control soft contact lenses (MCSCSLs) and innovative spectacle lens designs like defocus incorporated multiple segments (DIMS) will continue to play a vital role. These tools have demonstrated their ability to slow axial elongation. And with continued research, their efficacy may be further refined," said Mr. Ryan Ho, an



optometrist from Malaya Optical in Malaysia.

Ortho-K lenses work their magic overnight, reshaping the cornea so kids don't have to rely on glasses or contacts during the day. Multiple studies have shown that Ortho-K lenses are effective in controlling myopia progression. A meta-analysis has concluded that Ortho-K can slow the progression of myopia in school-aged children. Myopic progression was reduced by approximately 45%.³

And MCSCLs? They're designed to alter the way light hits the eye, helping to slow the progression of myopia. The technology behind these two is expected to improve with researchers continuously refining lens designs to optimize their effectiveness in slowing myopia progression.

Atropine drops with a side of precision

Atropine eye drops, which have already shown promising results in slowing myopia progression, could get a personalized makeover.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong's (CUHK) Faculty of Medicine conducted a randomized, placebo-controlled, double-masked trial of low-concentration atropine eye drops to evaluate their effectiveness in preventing myopia.⁴

"Pharmacological advances are expected, with new studies indicating that low-dose atropine eye drops may be prescribed more precisely based on individual genetic and ocular characteristics."

- Mr. Ryan Ho

Results of the LAMP2 study showed that among children aged four to nine without myopia, nightly use of low-concentration 0.05% atropine eye drops resulted in a significant

reduction in the incidence of myopia over two years—from 53.0% to 28.4% (a relative reduction of 46.4%)—compared with placebo. The participants had at least one parent who was myopic.

"Pharmacological advances are expected, with new studies indicating that low-dose atropine eye drops may be prescribed more precisely based on individual genetic and ocular characteristics," said Mr. Ho.

This means that instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, each patient could get the exact dose of atropine that works best for them. This precision medicine approach may boost the effectiveness of treatments and minimize any potential side effects, making it a win-win for both optometrists and patients.

No one-size-fits-all approach

Mr. Muhammad Syimir Shahrul Izam, optometrist and founder of Quest Eyecare, Malaysia, emphasized the growing importance of staying updated on myopia control methods.

"Myopia control options are now widely recognized. It is essential to stay up-to-date with the latest advancements and developments in myopia control and to continuously enhance our knowledge in this area," he said. He also highlights the effectiveness of various treatments, particularly combination approaches.

"All myopia control methods developed so far have shown promising outcomes. Combination treatment in particular, especially pharmacological with optical interventions, is an area worth exploring further to achieve even more significant and reliable results," he said.

"This could include the combination of atropine with myopia control spectacles (DIMS or HALT lenses) or the use of atropine alongside orthokeratology (Ortho-K). These approaches have the potential to provide enhanced outcomes and offer more effective management for myopia progression," said Mr. Syimir.

A two-year randomized study showed that combined 0.01% atropine and Ortho-K therapy resulted in retarding axial elongation compared with Ortho-K alone (0.17 vs. 0.34 mm) in 96 Chinese children.⁵

Looking ahead, Mr. Syimir also sees light therapy playing a bigger role in myopia control. "Light therapy will also be something that we'll be seeing more in the next years as a key role in controlling myopia progression. Various light-based therapies for myopia control are being investigated, ranging from retinal stimulation to the modulation of choroidal thickness. I believe extensive research is essential to fully assess the long-term safety and efficacy of light-based therapies for myopia control, ensuring their reliability for widespread clinical use," he noted.

Catch it before it gets worse

The sooner myopia is detected the better the treatment outcome. That's the mantra of 2025, and it's something optometrists will emphasize.

As Mr. Ho said, "The future of myopia management is rooted in personalization and early intervention." Thanks to advanced diagnostic tools and smart eyewear, clinicians will be able to spot early signs of myopia and intervene much earlier than ever before.

This is a game-changer, especially when lifestyle factors such as too much screen time and not enough outdoor activities can play a huge role in myopia progression.

Studies have shown that kids who spend more time outdoors are less likely to develop severe myopia,⁶ so expect to see more emphasis on outdoor activities as part of a well-rounded treatment plan.

What's coming next?

It's all about getting ahead of the game—before myopia takes over.

"The landscape of myopia management is rapidly evolving, and



2025 is set to bring a new wave of innovative solutions aimed at better control and earlier intervention. As an optometrist in Malaysia, it's clear that the integration of technology, research and clinical practice will drive significant changes in how we approach myopia management," said Mr. Ho.

One thing to note, however, is that a comprehensive discussion with the child's parents is crucial, as factors such as cost, time commitment and expectations need to be carefully considered, said Mr. Syimir.

"Encouraging young patients to spend more time outdoors, increasing their exposure to natural sunlight, emphasizing the importance of maintaining an appropriate reading distance, as well as reducing prolonged near work or screen time are simple yet effective strategies."

- Mr. Muhammad Syimir Shahrul Izam

"It is important to ensure that parents are fully informed about the available treatment options, their potential benefits, and any challenges involved in managing their child's myopia," he added.

Despite the wide array of treatment options available for myopia management, it is also crucial not to overlook the importance of basic preventive measures.

"Encouraging young patients to spend more time outdoors, increasing their exposure to natural sunlight, emphasizing the importance of maintaining an appropriate reading distance, as well as reducing prolonged near work or screen time are simple yet effective strategies," advised Mr. Muhammad Syimir.

As we look ahead, it's clear that the future for myopia management holds even greater potential with innovative technologies on the horizon. "These advancements will empower parents, optometrists and children alike, making it possible to address myopia progression at its source—daily behavior," said Mr. Ho.

"By combining wearable technology with proven optical and pharmacological methods, 2025 will mark a significant shift in how we prevent and control myopia worldwide," he concluded. 🌐



Contributors

Mr. Ryan Ho first undertook a Bachelor of Science in Microbiological Sciences at the University of Kansas, USA, in 1996 before studying Optometry at the International University College of Technology Twintech, Malaysia, in 2008. He is a skilled optometrist with over 15 years of experience. He obtained his first degree in B.Sc. at the University of Kansas, USA, and continued to pursue his passion for his Bachelor of Optometry (Hons) in Malaysia. His opinions on the treatment of Ortho-K, monovision, progressive lens fitting, and myopia in children have been well sought after on national television stations, such as RTM, TV3, and national newswires, as well as publications such as Bernama, The Star and more. He has helped build Malaya Optical from a family-owned business of three generations to become a two-time award winner of the prestigious Brand Laureate Award. While he is busy running his retail practices, online store, and building an eyewear brand, Mr. Ho makes sure to spend quality time with his family as they are the inspiration behind this brand. During his leisure time, Mr. Ho enjoys riding his road bike on numerous road adventures.



ryan@malayaoptical.com



Mr. Muhammad Syimir Shahrul Izam is a graduate of the University of Bradford, UK, with a BSc (Hons) in optometry and has been practicing for almost 10 years. After training at Specsavers, UK, for two years, he returned to Malaysia. He has worked as a full-time clinician and chief optometrist at Thomson Hospital, attending to pediatric patients. He is trained in assessing children with cerebral visual impairment. In 2024, he underwent a clinical attachment with a vitreoretinal surgeon and was awarded the Professional Certificate in Macular Disease Counselling by the National University of Malaysia. A member of the Association of Malaysian Optometrists, Mr. Muhammad Syimir recently established Quest Eyecare, his own primary eyecare practice. He is passionate about eye care in children, providing and promoting myopia management.



syimir_shahrul@yahoo.com

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Bridging the Co-Management Gap

Experts share strategies to enhance optometry-ophthalmology collaborative care delivery and foster seamless partnerships

by Diana Truong

With increasing patient demands and rapid technological innovations reshaping the eye care field, strong partnerships between optometrists and ophthalmologists are becoming essential. Co-management is no longer just an option—it's a necessity for delivering high-quality, efficient care.

Consider this: A patient with severe keratoconus is referred by an optometrist to an ophthalmologist for corneal cross-linking. After the procedure, the patient returns to the optometrist—who is better equipped to manage long-term visual needs—for ongoing

care and specialized contact lens fittings.

Or think of glaucoma surgery, where the optometrist handles pre-operative and post-operative care, freeing the ophthalmologist to focus on the surgical procedure itself.

"It opens me up to be more available to do surgeries," explained Dr. Rajen Desai, a cataract and glaucoma ophthalmologist based in New Jersey, USA. "So patients aren't waiting three or sometimes six months to get surgery."

Scenarios like these highlight the power of co-management. Optometrists bring their expertise to frontline patient care, while ophthalmologists offer surgical precision and advanced treatment options. Together, they form a continuum of care that ensures no step in the patient's journey is overlooked.

"It opens me up to be more available to do surgeries so patients aren't waiting three or sometimes six months to get surgery."

- Dr. Rajen Desai

"We all play a very important role in the well-being of the patients," said Dr. Glenda Aleman-Moheeputh, president and CEO of OK Love Myopia Control Experts in Florida, USA. "Having that collaboration is the best thing to do for the patient. It's the right thing to do for the patient."

The pillars of co-management

Successful co-management between optometrists and ophthalmologists



doesn't happen by chance—it's built on a strong foundation of trust, communication and streamlined systems. These pillars ensure that patients receive seamless, high-quality care while fostering collaboration and respect between providers.

A **smooth referral process** is the backbone of effective co-management, and it's about more than just sending a patient from one office to another. It's about ensuring the handoff is efficient, accurate and patient-focused.

By using standardized forms, training staff on referral best practices, and following up diligently with patients, providers can remove barriers that often slow down or complicate the process.

Shared treatment protocols help define roles and responsibilities, ensuring that both parties are aligned in their approach to care. These protocols should be flexible enough to reflect local or regional standards yet consistent enough to maintain a high level of patient care.

Creating a communication workflow—complete with updates on patient progress—sets clear expectations on both sides. With the right tools and practices, optometrists and ophthalmologists can bridge gaps and eliminate confusion, making co-management as smooth as possible

Underlying these pillars is a **fundamental respect** for each provider's role in patient care. "Industry has made the optometry-ophthalmology playing field more level and more respected," said Dr. Desai. "We all know our scope of practice—surgery and non-surgery—but within the non-surgical space, there's a great level of respect."

"Industry has made the optometry-ophthalmology playing field more level and more respected."

- Dr. Rajen Desai

Co-management tips and tricks

Building a robust co-management system between optometrists and ophthalmologists requires a multi-faceted approach. From cultivating strong professional relationships to focusing on patient-centered care and leveraging technology, these strategies ensure a cohesive, collaborative process that benefits everyone—especially the patient.

1 Build strong professional relationships

At the core of effective co-management is trust, and trust takes effort. Developing relationships with other providers involves networking and maintaining regular contact.

One unique way to identify potential co-managing partners is through industry representatives. "Optometrists often ask sales reps for recommendations on who's good in glaucoma or cataract surgery in the area," shared Dr. Desai. "Sales reps know every doctor—they know who runs a good ship and who doesn't. That insight is invaluable."

Additionally, being available and responsive builds trust. "All of my referring optometrists have my personal cell phone number," noted Dr. Desai. "That direct connection addresses inefficiencies and ensures they're never left waiting for updates."

Maintaining a strong relationship also requires work. "You have to nourish the relationship," advised Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh. "You have to try to meet up with them once in a while. It's a constant thing, like any other type of relationship."

2 Treat patients like VIPs

Effective co-management isn't just about providers working together—it's also about ensuring patients understand the process. Providing consistent messaging across specialties reduces confusion and builds patient confidence.





Dr. Desai emphasized the value of personal interactions with patients. “[The optometrist] puts me on speaker phone with the patient in the room and introduces me. That ability is priceless,” he said. “The patient sees us as a team, not separate entities, and it takes so much fear out of the process. It’s not just handing them a business card; it’s creating a VIP experience,” Dr. Desai added. “Patients see that we care and they feel reassured knowing help is immediate.”

3 Leverage technology

Efficient communication hinges on technology that enables secure, real-time data sharing. While traditional methods like faxing are still common, they can delay updates and lead to inefficiencies.

“The old-fashioned way of doing things is faxing referral forms,” said Dr. Desai. “I’m using an app called pMD (San Francisco, USA). It’s HIPAA-compliant and sends records directly to my electronic medical records (EMR) system, cutting down on delays and making our workflow more efficient.”

A pathway to transformative care

Expanding educational opportunities can create a shared language and understanding, fostering trust and improving collaboration. “We need more conversations about how to bridge gaps between our professions,” said Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh.

“Co-management isn’t just a technical process; it’s a relationship. And like any relationship, it requires communication, trust and effort.”

- Dr. Glenda Aleman-Moheeputh

Industry support also plays a role. “One way that the industry can

better support collaboration is to provide funding for joint events,” Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh suggested. “It’s important for optometrists and ophthalmologists to meet face-to-face, to build trust and relationships.”

The co-management of eye care represents more than just a partnership between optometrists and ophthalmologists—it is a pathway to transformative patient care. By fostering collaboration through education and industry support, these two professions can work seamlessly to deliver exceptional outcomes.

At its heart, co-management is about people. It’s about a patient who feels reassured when their optometrist and surgeon collaborate in real time. It’s about professionals who trust and respect each other, working together to navigate complex cases.



Contributors

Dr. Rajen Desai, MD, FACS, is a board-certified cataract and glaucoma surgeon with Precision Eye Partners in New Jersey, USA, a referral-only surgical practice. Dr. Desai graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Stanford University, followed by an MD from Stanford Medical School, with an extra year of training in clinical research. He served as 2nd Lieutenant and pilot in the US Air Force Auxiliary Civil Air Patrol in Texas, followed by residency and a Heed Foundation Fellowship in glaucoma at Northwestern University. Dr. Desai produced over 50 peer-reviewed publications and presentations across the country. Optometrists often refer their patients to Dr. Desai for them to receive the most advanced surgical options, as he was the first in his region to operate using the iStent Inject, the Ahmed ClearPath tube shunt, the Streamline canaloplasty device, the Envy intraocular lens, the iDose travoprost implant, and the AlloFlo glaucoma device.

rajen.u.desai@gmail.com



“Co-management isn’t just a technical process; it’s a relationship,” said Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh. “And like any relationship, it requires communication, trust and effort.”

By embracing co-management as a shared commitment to better care, optometrists and ophthalmologists have the opportunity to not only elevate their practices but to change lives. When the best of both worlds come together, the result is clear: A brighter future for patients everywhere. 🌟

With over 20 years of experience in the optometry field, Dr. Glenda Aleman-Moheeputh is a vision expert. She graduated from Nova Southeastern University in Florida, USA, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Vision Science. She went on to receive her Doctor of Optometry degree from NSU’s College of Optometry in which she led the class of 2017 as vice president. Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh is certified to practice optometry in Florida with a certification in orthokeratology and scleral lens fitting specializing in Paragon CRT, Contex OK lens, GOV Ortho-K lens, Euclid Emerald lens, Europa lens, and Zen lens. She currently serves as the president of the American Academy of Myopia Control and Orthokeratology (AAOMC) South Florida Chapter. She also holds the position of lead ambassador for the Optometry Divas Miami Chapter and acts on the Chair Advisory Committee of the Broward College Opticianry program. Presently, Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh is an acting optometrist and business owner, managing her own private practice, iSmart Vision Care. She performs comprehensive eye exams, specializes in treating corneal disease and myopia control, and has a specialty contact lens clinic. In her mission to stop the myopia epidemic, Dr. Aleman-Moheeputh has recently launched her new venture, OK Love Myopia Control Experts (www.orthoklove.com), designed to educate and consult fellow optometrists about myopia control treatments.

gmoheep@gmail.com



Is Your Practice Out of Focus?

Dr. Kevin Chan shares five expert insights for sharpening and modernizing your optometry practice

by Tan Sher Lynn

Modernizing your optometry practice is essential to meet evolving patient expectations that go beyond quality care. Dr. Kevin Chan, a U.S. optometrist, offers valuable insights and strategies for transforming the image of your optometry practice.

In today's rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, simply providing excellent eye care is no longer enough. Optometry practices must adapt to changing patient expectations and optimize new technologies to thrive. This means embracing a holistic approach to modernization, encompassing everything from office design and branding to patient engagement and team development.

We spoke with Dr. Kevin Chan, who shared his top five tips for creating a thriving, future-ready, and patient-centered environment.

1 Revamp your office with the 'Three Cs'

While having a spacious office often allows flexibility to accommodate specific uses of space, it isn't always feasible for all optometry practices, noted Dr. Chan.

"In most practices, office space is typically used to cover all aspects of eye care services. However, this can sometimes result in a 'cookie-cutter' look. To modernize an optometry office, it doesn't necessarily mean getting a bigger space," he explained.



Dr. Chan highlighted the three Cs of revamping your office:

- **Compartmentalization**—Regardless of the square footage, creating a sense of flow in the office is key. Compartmentalization doesn't mean dividing the office with physical walls but rather strategically planning the layout so patients feel a cohesive transition between areas. For example, does pre-testing need to be confined to a single space? How is the exam room connected to the rest of the office? The goal is to design compartments that make patients feel integrated into the experience, not isolated.
- **Categorization**—Helping patients understand and feel comfortable with the office's functionality is essential. Avoid rigidly labeling spaces as X, Y or Z, which might limit their multifunctionality. Instead, explain the purpose and benefit of each service. For example, replace "I'll walk you to the optical section to pick out your frames" with "Let's explore how progressive glasses can benefit your daily activities—my optical assistant will guide you further." This approach enhances patient engagement and understanding.
- **Core value**—It's a common misconception that higher costs automatically equate to higher value. True value requires strategic and thoughtful delivery. Modernizing an optometry practice involves considering the patients' perspectives, not just the owner's. For instance, when recommending progressive glasses, do patients see them as worth the cost? This perception often depends on how well practitioners educate patients on the benefits rather than simply selling a product. Helping patients understand how a service or product improves their work and social lives can make a significant impact.

2 Build a strong brand (social media, anyone?)

"Nearly 90% of patients in America use social media for health information,¹ and 74% search online before scheduling an appointment with an eye care provider,"² said Dr. Chan.

Healthcare branding is no longer optional—it's essential for providing reliable, authentic information and creating a unique identity that attracts patients.

"Beyond offering services, branding should promise quality care and enhance the patient experience. While a great logo or website is important, leveraging social media to engage patients is even more crucial," he stressed. "For instance, sharing patient testimonials is a great way to celebrate the 'wins' of your practice. It also helps solidify the core values of how you want to portray your brand to the prospective patients."

Dr. Chan highlighted another effective way to use social media: Focusing on patient education. "Not only does it increase patient engagement and autonomy in shared decision-making, but it also improves adherence to treatments and recommendations by the provider. A systematic review (2019) involving over 4,000 participants found that using smartphones or tablet apps could boost the overall effectiveness of interventions from 69% (under 'usual' or non-technologically driven care) to 78% when patient education included at least one 'push' notification per week. This demonstrates that keeping patients engaged with the latest medical information in a measurable way can effectively influence behavioral changes and elevate patient satisfaction," Dr. Chan shared.



≈ 90%

of patients in America use social media for health information

According to Dr. Chan, building a strong healthcare brand requires the following steps:

- **Defining your mission and values.** Clearly articulate your practice's purpose and values to shape how patients perceive your services.
- **Understanding your audience.** Study patient demographics, preferences and behaviors to personalize branding and connect authentically.
- **Engaging with your community.** Go beyond a static website by creating videos, writing educational blogs, sponsoring events and hosting eye health sessions. These efforts build trust, visibility and community connection, strengthening your brand's reputation.

3 Enhance patient care and loyalty

In today's society, developing patient loyalty has become more and more selective and competitive. The healthcare industry is no exception.

"One of the key differentiators between a 'good' optometry practice versus a 'great' one can simply be a matter of how to foster trust for doctor-patient relationships. In a survey by Deloitte,³ nearly 60% of consumers responded that 'care' and 'compassion' are the key determinants of choosing their healthcare providers. Just as good reviews can positively impact the reputation of a practice, four out of five respondents said that merely one negative experience with a healthcare practice can completely tarnish the doctor-patient relationship due to loss of trust," Dr. Chan shared.

Meanwhile, loyalty marketing isn't just about retaining patients—it also involves attracting new ones. Dr. Chan noted that according to consumer research by Forrester, it costs five times more to acquire a new patient than to retain an existing one.



To foster long-term loyalty, Dr. Chan suggested the following:

- **Seek feedback.** Use social media to gather patient testimonials, both positive and negative. Address concerns promptly to show accountability and build trust.
- **Celebrate loyalty.** Highlight real patient stories on social media to encourage user-generated content (UGC). This inspires others to share their experiences, strengthening your brand and expanding reach through word-of-mouth.

4 Empower your team

According to Dr. Chan, the success of practice does not simply rely on the owner or practitioner alone—having a strong team with well-trained staff is also equally crucial.

Dr. Chan suggested the following:

- **Invest in staff training.** “To revamp and enhance the value of optometric practices, it has become increasingly more important to invest in staff training and cultivate continuous support since they are the ‘face’ of your practice,” he said. “Depending on the roles involved, each staff member should undergo thorough training (either technical or customer-oriented) so that they would feel confident and proficient in fulfilling their job responsibilities.
- **Motivate the team.** Just as incentivizing loyal customers, staff showing positive job performance should also be celebrated and incentivized periodically to further foster staff loyalty to your practice,” he added.

74%



of patients search online before an appointment with an eye care provider

5 Set measurable goals to evaluate success

Measurable goals provide clear, quantifiable metrics to evaluate practice performance. Dr. Chan

Below are a few key elements in the EOS that he has been using with his team:

- **Accountability chart—Define roles and responsibilities.** It is essential for associate doctors and staff to clearly understand their specific roles and responsibilities. Effective teamwork requires each team member to actively acknowledge and participate in specific roles, ensuring accountability and maintaining team engagement.
- **‘Rocks’—Identify the most important task.** Aligned with accountability, each team member is assigned a “rock,” representing a key task or priority they are responsible for. Acting as the “captain” of their task, they ensure productivity and work toward achieving measurable goals.
- **‘Scorecard’—Track measurable performance.** A scorecard highlights key metrics to evaluate weekly and quarterly performance. “For example, one of my scorecard goals is to convert 80% of patients into first-time contact lens wearers. By tracking the daily and weekly number of patients interested in or eligible for contact lenses, I can project annual goals and drive sustainable business growth,” Dr. Chan explained.

shared that his office used the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) to help guide the measures of business performance, as well as a barometer for business improvement.

More than meets the eye

Revamping your practice goes beyond aesthetics—it’s about enhancing care, adopting new technologies, building your brand and fostering an efficient, welcoming environment. By reimagining value delivery, you can establish your clinic as a trusted, future-ready leader in the community. 🧐

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Contributor

Dr. Kevin Chan, OD, MS, FAAO, is the senior clinical director at Treehouse Eyes - Myopia Care For Kids, an eye care clinical network with facilities located in 19 different US. As a professional affairs consultant for Johnson & Johnson Vision, he also provides clinical consultation and educational events pertaining to orthokeratology. A graduate of the New England College of Optometry, Dr. Chan is an internationally recognized advocate for increasing awareness of myopia as a disease among practitioners and the general public.

 kevin.chan@treehouseeyes.com



EssilorLuxottica Acquires Pulse Audition, Strengthens Presence in the Hearing Space

EssilorLuxottica leaps forward in its innovation journey with the acquisition of Pulse Audition, a French startup delivering AI-based noise reduction and voice enhancement through algorithms allowing people with hearing impairment to better understand speech, even in noisy environments.

By integrating Pulse Audition's proprietary technologies, expertise in AI software development, embedded AI, and audio signal processing, as well as its top talents, EssilorLuxottica will complement proprietary hardware and software to improve the quality of its products and solutions in the long term. This acquisition aligns seamlessly with the Group's strategy in the hearing solutions space, marking a

natural evolution in the journey that started in 2023 with the acquisition of Nuance Hearing.

Francesco Milleri, Chairman and CEO, and Paul du Saillant, Deputy CEO at EssilorLuxottica commented: "We continuously explore market opportunities in AI and big data, and this acquisition in France—one of our home countries – is a perfect fit with our long-term goals and investments in hearing solutions. It reinforces our commitment to advancing the next category of computing platforms, also in Europe. We are excited to welcome this talented team to our Group and look forward to further unlocking the enormous potential in the underserved hearing space."

For more information, visit www.essilorluxottica.com.



WCO CooperVision Myopia Management Navigator is Now Being Used in 126 Countries

Less than a year since its launch, the WCO CooperVision® Myopia Management Navigator is now being actively used in 126 countries worldwide, marking a significant milestone for this new educational resource. Its usage represents 64% of all countries globally, with the United States, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, India, Australia, and Canada having the most active users.

The World Council of Optometry partnered with Cooper to launch the Navigator (myopianavigator.info) in April 2024. Developed to support the adoption of myopia management as the standard of care, the Navigator provides evidence-based content, advice, and practical actions to help eye care professionals in all stages of their myopia management journey. It highlights the three Ms of myopia management—mitigation, measurement, and management—offering actionable insights within each section.

"We celebrate this enormous achievement for the Navigator, which demonstrates the impact the Navigator is having all over the world. As the adoption

of myopia management continues to grow, so does awareness of the crucial role myopia management plays in protecting vision in children now and adults in the future. We look forward to seeing even more users explore the Navigator in the years ahead, driving continued progress in transforming children's eye care," shared WCO President Dr. Sandra Block.

The myopia management standard of care resolution was developed and introduced by WCO in April 2021. It includes the three main standard of care pillars of mitigation, measurement, and management. With the global support of CooperVision, WCO has since worked to advance awareness and adoption of this landmark initiative, which includes the launch of the Navigator. The WCO appointed a team of ambassadors who are experts on the topic to raise awareness of the Navigator based on their myopia management roles, outreach, and practice-building initiatives. All four Navigator ambassadors are actively involved in day-to-day myopia management.

For questions about myopia management, email the WCO ambassadors at MMNambassador@worldoptometry.org.



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