

Unwrapping an

The Marco EPIC wows patients and I appreciate the convenience of fewer exam lanes, better patient flow and increased net income.

After retiring from the Navy, I shared offices with another ophthalmologist for 10 years, where the practice had grown at a rate of about 7% each year. A few years ago, I began making plans to open a solo practice that would include an optometrist. I wanted to create something that would succeed me, out of both a sense of obligation to serving my community and the desire to provide myself with retirement income. I planned the new practice very deliberately — slowly researching the options and arriving at what I believed to be the best choices.

Then I met with a Marco representative about a new autorefractor and ended up with an EPIC instead — and a different, more profitable practice than I'd envisioned.

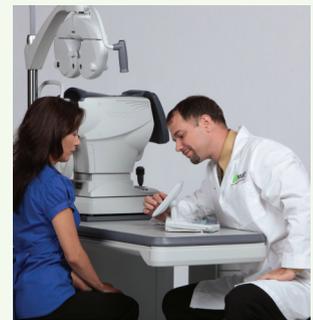
Paradigm Shift

I called Marco because I'd used their autorefractors for years, in and out of the Navy. I found their equipment indispensable and wanted to buy a new autorefractor for the practice. When my Marco rep came in, he listened to what I was planning and assessed my needs. His recommendation dramatically changed my view of our practice layout and patient flow.

He suggested that I postpone purchasing a new autorefractor and consider an EPIC instead. He showed me how it would improve efficiency, allowing me to have fewer exam lanes. Instead of dividing my square footage into seven exam lanes, I would need only four lanes, an EPIC room and two history/interview rooms.

It was a major paradigm shift. Rather than getting patients lined up in rooms while the doctor circulates, patients would move through the practice swiftly and efficiently and the doctor would circulate less. Thankfully, this concept came early enough in the planning, so I was able to change my practice design. I analyzed what the Marco rep told me, interviewed other practices who used the EPIC and began to embrace the idea.

With the EPIC, patients are really wowed when they see their old and new prescriptions. It's a practical tool that shows them the improvement we're making in their vision correction. Nothing we could tell them could make a greater impact than seeing it with their own eyes.



One solo ophthalmologist in practice with three ODs had three EPICs, which they'd been using for 8 years. He told me, "EPICs are inexpensive. Don't even think about the cost. It will more than pay for itself." Today, decreasing reimbursements have us all turning a critical eye toward expenses. But my practice is growing rapidly, and I'm already considering the addition of another EPIC.

Time Saved, Money Earned

The EPIC saves me time and money and makes work easier in the practice. With the EPIC, I have more time to converse and connect with patients or see more patients per day. Since we started using the EPIC, my technicians take about 6 minutes to get a good refraction, compared to about 10 to 15 minutes previously. I spend 1 or 2 minutes



EPIC Surprise

validating or tweaking the prescription during the exam. At this time, I'm seeing 5 to 10 more patients per day.

The EPIC also helps me provide a better product. I'm practical, so I've learned to stay as close as possible to each patient's existing prescription. The EPIC has allowed me not only to prescribe correction for previously unrecognized astigmatism, but also to correct for new astigmatism or axis change with more confidence than I ever had in the past.

The system also cuts down considerably on remakes — and I hate remakes. In addition to being expensive, remakes annoy the lab and disappoint the patient. It's embarrassing to admit to the patient that we've made a mistake.

The EPIC also boosts eye-glass sales, because patients have more time to browse, which means they're more likely to buy from us rather than rushing out the door. With the EPIC and an updated boutique-style optical area, our optical sales have more than doubled.

The Wow Factor

In today's world, we're routinely wowed by technology. Our patients are no different. They want — and expect — to be wowed in our practices. The EPIC makes the test itself easier, using split screens or circles where patients judge which is better, rather than having them look at successive images.

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If I'm implanting someone with a premium IOL, that "wow" goes a long way. Many of these patients come to me because I'm the director of a surgery center, and they have high expectations. They have the same high expectations for the technology I use. If I fulfill their expectations, patients will have more confidence in me and they'll be more satisfied with their experience.

Cataract surgery and premium IOLs are a booming part of my practice in a difficult time, so it's paramount to my practice growth to not only provide a wonderful outcome, but also give patients a great experience. The EPIC helps patients feel like they're getting the best, and I tell them, as I do with all the top-notch equipment I use, that this is the latest technology. It's a "wow factor" that works for all of us. 

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Staff Reactions

I asked my technicians and my optometrist for some EPIC pros and cons. The only cons were cleaning the window between patients and some additional manipulation required when using the EPIC with certain wheelchair-bound patients who can't hold themselves forward.

The list of pros is much longer:

- EPIC lets technicians show off their skills, helping people get the best refraction, answering questions, and using the best equipment.
- Training was great. Marco trained staff on site, online and on a trip to Florida.
- It's intuitive to use, so techs learn fast and the automation reduces human error. A junior technician proudly tells me she can get 20/15 or 20/10 with no problem.
- It helps techs understand some basic concepts of optics better. They also see how conditions, such as cataracts, affect vision.
- It's fun and rewarding to wow the patients by showing them their old and new prescriptions. Techs can dramatically improve vision and show patients right away.
- The EPIC automatically relaxes patients' accommodation for an accurate prescription.
- Flow is better because we can refract patients before dilation or tonometry.
- Techs know that the more efficient we are, the more money we make.