

Accurate and Automated Refraction

are at the core of efficient eye exams

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD EDLOW BY JAMES KNAUB, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Richard Edlow, Executive Chairman of EyeCare Service Partners, sees excellent automated refraction with smooth EMR integration as a key driver of quality, efficiency and a positive patient experience. Dr. Edlow, a trained optometrist, believes building those three components into routine comprehensive eye exams is at the core of the practice's mission to provide patients with quality care.

For two decades – before a 2014 acquisition formed EyeCare Services Partners – Dr. Edlow served as CEO of the Katzen Eye Group's five offices and one surgery center in the Baltimore area. Staffed by 23 ophthalmologists and optometrists, EyeCare Services Partners operates on a larger scale than most groups – seeing as many as 300 patients per day at its largest site. But Dr. Edlow says creating an efficient workflow is crucial to any busy practice – no matter the size – for shared and distinct reasons.

High Volume Requires High Tech

"To properly see the number of patients we see and offer a very positive patient experience, we have to utilize technology," Dr. Edlow says. "We've found the EPIC autorefractors to be a key component in allowing the doctors to properly see the volume of patients who come through the office each day, to do it in a patient-centric way, and to utilize our clinical support staff to perform the complete clinical workup for the doctor. We find these systems allow our doctors – especially our optometry team – to see an additional two patients an hour, sometimes three, more than if we didn't have the EPIC systems."

Dr. Edlow says the group uses three EPIC 5100 Refraction Stations, configured with the multi-modality M3 autorefrac-

tors with non-contact tonometry function, at its main Baltimore-area office. Two are dedicated to the optometry staff and are used for comprehensive eye exams. The third is used primarily by cataract surgeons to evaluate patients and help plan surgeries. (The group uses EPIC 5100 Refraction Stations at its other sites as well.)

A Workup Not a Workout

"The EPICs allow our optometrists to see more patients per hour," Dr. Edlow says. "The patients truly appreciate the technology of the EPIC for their refractions. For the ophthalmologists, particularly the cataract surgeons, it provides a good sense – before additional diagnostic testing – of what type of lens implant they'll discuss with the patient."

After patients are registered, they are taken to the EPIC Refraction Station for an autorefraction and to collect other diagnostic data before seeing the ophthalmologist or optometrist. All full exam patients go through the EPIC workup, Dr. Edlow says. Follow-up patients don't, unless they're in for postoperative visits.

"Our clinical workup teams take patients back to complete the workup," Dr. Edlow says. "Then patients are taken to the exam room where the staff completes the chief complaint and history information prior to patients seeing the doctor."

Autorefractions take 3 to 5 minutes, according to Marco, and a complete work-up takes about 10 minutes. In most routine exams, workup includes non-contact tonometry using the M3, Dr. Edlow says. Glaucoma patients are taken to the applanation tonometer to confirm their IOP.

In addition to efficiently gathering data using the EPIC system, information is automatically uploaded to the practice's NextGen EMR system with no risk of transcription error,

so the diagnostic data is ready and waiting for the doctor in the exam room.

Info Without Error

“One of the features that’s great about the EPIC is how many data fields it automatically transmits into our EMR system,” Dr. Edlow says. “So once the refraction is complete, with a click of the mouse, you can instantly add their old prescription, their new refraction and cornea measurements. More than 50 different data fields automatically feed from the EPIC into the EMR system.”

EPIC’s integration with their EMR system, the precision of the refraction and other workup data, and the efficiency of delivering information to the doctor in the exam room improve both the quality and efficiency of the center’s exams.

Seeing is Believing

After the doctor enters the exam room and greets the patient, another key advantage of the EPIC system emerges: the capability to quickly demonstrate the patient’s new refraction.

“For the routine comprehensive exam patient, the real advantage of the EPIC is that doctors can instantly show patients the difference between their previous refraction and their new refraction with the push of a button,” Dr. Edlow says. “If you’re using a phoropter in the exam room, it can be a challenge showing the patient the old and the new refractions. With the EPIC, you can do it with the push of a button and patients can more easily appreciate and value the difference.”

For cataract patients, Dr. Edlow says the efficient, accurate refraction and keratometer readings help inform the ophthalmologist’s discussion regarding IOL selection – whether a multifocal, toric, or monofocal IOL is most appropriate for the patient – as well as whether the patient is a good candidate for femtosecond laser astigmatism correction during the procedure.

Good Partners

While technology and automation help EyeCare Service Partners deliver efficient, top-quality care, Dr. Edlow says



The EPIC Refraction System

Marco’s depth of support provides another key component: expertise in scheduling patients to optimize workflow in a busy practice.

“Marco shares their expertise when you acquire one of their systems,” Dr. Edlow says. “Their people work with you to fine tune and customize your scheduling system to better integrate the EPIC into your workflow, which really increases productivity.

Accomplishing this type of efficiency improvement, would be much more difficult to develop on your own and could otherwise be an impediment

to adopting such a valuable technology.”

Dr. Edlow says each doctor’s schedule is an individual template, but a typical schedule includes three comprehensive visits per hour and two or three follow-up visits.

He says the basis for the initial decision to move to the EPIC refraction systems was a cost-benefit analysis, considering the equipment cost and staffing cost for the workup team to operate the system and the increases in patient volume and optical sales. He believes that as long as the practice has the market demand to increase volume and fill the exam slots created by improved efficiency, it’s a clear economic win for a practice.

“The value the EPIC adds to workflow and production allows us to thrive,” Dr. Edlow says. “I don’t think we could survive without it in this day and age. A busy group needs technology like the EPIC system to meet the demand for services. Without it, it would be nearly impossible to be profitable and successfully manage workflow, while providing the quality care we want for our patients.” ●

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