

Education and Efficiency in a Solo Practice

Examining the OPD-Scan III experience at Eye Care for RI

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES M. COLLINS

BY JAMES KNAUB, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

You'd expect accurate refractions and efficient data collection from quality, automated systems, but Charles M. Collins, MD, says his Marco OPD-Scan III's tremendous value as a patient education tool is equally important to him and his patients in Middletown, RI.

"The technology doesn't just help me better understand cases; it helps the patient understand. That's one of the things I find most powerful about the equipment," says Dr. Collins, a solo ophthalmologist who practices with two optometrists at Eye Care for RI. "In the exam lane, I can talk with the patient and say, 'Let me show you what's going on with your eye, help you understand why you can't see better — and what we're going to do about it.'"

In routine cases, the practice's OPD-Scan III systems, EPIC Refraction systems, and TRS-5100 systems help doctors and staff collect accurate autorefractive, corneal topography, wavefront aberrometry, keratometry, and pupillometry data. Dr. Collins and his colleagues, Frederic J. Kelley, OD, and Carlos DeFreitas, OD, use screening rooms equipped with OPD-Scan III and EPIC Refraction systems and exam lanes equipped with TRS-5100 autorefractors, all of which are connected to the practice's EMR. The primary results in those routine cases are accurate glasses and contact lens prescriptions as well as data to support top-quality surgical outcomes to meet patients' high expectations, which Dr. Collins sees as efficiency in its own right.

"You learn to understand how much time is saved by not having surprises," Dr. Collins says. For example, when you tell



Technology can improve patient education capabilities.

a patient that you achieved exactly the result you expected, you meet expectations and avoid the time it would take to explain why you didn't achieve the desired result. Dr. Collins says accuracy also cuts down on the need for follow-up visits.

Powerful Patient Education Tool

Dr. Collins says his more complicated cases are where OPD-Scan III and his autorefractor also prove invaluable. He tells of a long-time patient who had an uncommon corneal degenerative condition, pellucid marginal corneal degeneration. Eye Care for RI doctors had been caring for the patient for more than a decade when she also developed cataracts. Because of the patient's cornea irregularities, she would still need contact lenses or special glasses to achieve her best possible vision after surgery. Initially, she didn't understand why her cataract surgery wouldn't produce the same visual results

that many of her friends had achieved. Using color cornea displays produced using the OPD-Scan III, Dr. Collins was able to help the patient understand the difference between her cornea shortly after removing her contact lenses and the same eye 3 weeks later after it had stabilized.

"She's had such distortion in her vision, but wasn't able to understand why until we used the OPD technology," Dr. Collins says. "We helped her understand why she needs contact lenses to see as well as possible. We were able to show her the warpage in her cornea and show why she would still need contact lenses to create an artificial surface on the eye to achieve crisply focused light rays on her retina."

As with any vision correction, setting expectations is crucial. "It's important to let patients know that their corneal irregularities will limit the improvement they can expect, compared with what they hear from friends and neighbors about their surgeries," Dr. Collins adds. He says the technology makes it much easier to show the patient, which is better and more efficient than just explaining cornea irregularities and what a patient can expect from surgery. Dr. Collins says OPD-Scan III technology has shown similar educational value in chronic dry eye and pterygium patients.

"There is an appreciation when patients 'get it,' and it also gives them confidence in me, as their physician, when they understand what to expect from surgery," Dr. Collins says. "It's very convincing to patients and their families."

Efficient Practice

Quality outcomes and patient education are central to the service Dr. Collins seeks to provide, but he also has to consider the economics of his practice. After serving as an ophthalmologist in the United States Navy, Dr. Collins went into private practice 14 years ago, sharing space and expenses with another physician. When he contemplated opening his own practice, he considered Marco for some of its equipment. He found that the company also provided considerable assistance in designing an efficient practice, including the number of collection stations and exam lanes. Eye Care for RI now utilizes four exam lanes and three collection stations, which support the two exam lanes Dr. Collins uses and the other two lanes used by the optometrist on duty. Two of the data collection stations contain OPD-Scan IIIs and EPIC Refractive Systems; the third is used for follow-up patients who don't require refraction. The general ophthalmology practice employs five technicians and regularly utilizes referral retina and glaucoma specialists.

"Marco understood that unless you're seeing more than 80 patients in a day, you really only need two exam lanes [per

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Eye Care for RI**

doctor] because you're going from room A to room B and back to A," Dr. Collins says. "They helped me understand the economics of having fewer exam lanes and more data collection stations. They changed my paradigm."

When he first opened his current practice, Dr. Collins had one data collection station with the EPIC and OPD-Scan III combination and one with equipment from his previous practice. He says it didn't take long to notice that the collection station with the Marco equipment was always busy, while the other room wasn't. Eventually, he added an EPIC Refraction System to the second data collection station and, earlier this year, purchased the second OPD-Scan III because the OPD data was needed for so many patients and the system allowed more patients to be seen efficiently. Dr. Collins doesn't charge patients an additional fee for using the OPD as some practices have done; despite this, he says the Marco equipment pays for itself.

"My practice is thriving because my patients are seeing well, or they understand why they are not seeing well," Dr. Collins says, firmly believing that both are important to that success. ●



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