

# Marco TRS: Benefits to Make ODs Go “Wow!”

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BY STEVE RICE, OD

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I have been in private practice for 28 years and I am the managing partner of Vision Clinic, a four-location practice in southwest Missouri. We have nine optometrists supported by a staff of 40. We have more than 18,000 patient encounters annually, and we practice full-scope optometry. We have always positioned ourselves as a progressive and leading-edge practice that focuses on a culture of excellence in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Cliché as it may sound, we do try to exceed our patients' expectations at every touch point. Patient satisfaction is our minimum threshold as we strive to make our patients raving fans of our services.

Marco's Total Refraction System (TRS) digital refractor plays a major role in our efforts. Indeed, we have utilized TRS systems (six of them, actually) in our practice since 2009. Before that, we had been leveraging automated EPIC workstations and other Marco technology since 2000.

## Ergonomic Advantage

We started implementing the automated TRS systems for a number of reasons. Among the most significant and impactful for me was the marked ergonomic advantage over standard manual phoropters. I sustained a compression fracture and herniated disc in my neck some years ago, and I have struggled with neck, shoulder, and arm pain ever since. When my neurosurgeon and physical therapist suggested that some of my pain might be related to my work, the thought of refracting without having to raise my arms began to pique my interest in

the TRS, which utilizes a portable control console. Almost immediately upon making the switch, I noticed an appreciable improvement in my neck, shoulder, and arm pain. I wouldn't have believed it had I not experienced it, but my end-of-day discomfort was significantly reduced. It was a life-changing difference-maker and big improvement in my professional well-being.

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## Enhancements All Around

Beyond my interest in the TRS for personal health reasons, we were also aiming to improve practice workflows, increase efficiencies and revenues, and enhance the patient “WOW” factor. Remarkably, the TRS did all that and more. Gone, for example, was the awkward ritual of crossing in front of the patient to retrieve the subjective results from the phoropter. It had become common for me to cut across the patient's personal space multiple times to ensure I recorded the correct end point. Apparently, my short-term “refraction memory” while

conversing with patients was woefully poor. With the integrated technology of the TRS, all of that became a thing of the past; the results are now automatically populated into our electronic medical record system without transcription errors.

Impressed by the ease and precision of the TRS process, our staff was quick to embrace the new technology. Our workflow efficiencies improved dramatically — we were easily able to see two to three more patients each day while feeling less fatigued by day's end. At a revenue-per-refraction of \$400, seeing just two more patients per day can result in a conservative increase in annual revenue of about \$200,000.

Speaking of return on investment, one of the best things about the TRS is its ability to demonstrate, with the push of a button, the difference in vision between new subjective findings versus an existing prescription. This not only provides a “wow factor” for patients, but it can also lead to patient confidence and increased eyeglass and contact lens sales.

Indeed, I found myself shocked at how often, using the ancient phoropter, I would attempt to talk patients out of new glasses because I didn't think the device revealed enough of a change in vision. Remarkably, once patients are shown the change as revealed by the TRS, they invariably want to buy new eyeglasses. I can all but guarantee that your patients will buy more eyeglasses and contact lenses as a result of using the TRS. As a side note, when we first made the change to the TRS, it was amazing how often patients remarked, “I was wondering how long you were going to keep putting me behind that old thing to figure out my prescription. Everything else in your office is computerized!” The wow factor is an undeniably positive side effect of leveraging the TRS.

## Times Are Changing

Optometric practice has changed at light speed in just the last 5 to 10 years. I often joke with my patients that if we practiced today the same way we did 20 years ago, we would be sued for malpractice. What is so exciting is that many of the changes have had a very net-positive



**Marco digital refraction system with portable control console**

effect on patient health, well-being, and vision. Today's patients are much more knowledgeable, discerning, and demanding. As such, to capture and retain them requires us to be on top of our game at all times. We also face challenges — seemingly never-ending downward price pressure, third-party vision plans that continue to devalue our services, Internet purchasing trends, stiff competition, and others. Our business plans today look significantly different than they did not that long ago. Today, a key component in any success-

ful business plan must include embracing and utilizing technology to benefit our practices and our patients, especially technology with significant ROI benefits.

## Trusted Partner

Doing business with partners you can trust also is extremely valuable. From our perspective, Marco has been outstanding — helping us to embrace the changes in eyecare practice and to shift our paradigm 180 degrees. David Marco and his team have always been about providing leading-edge technology that benefits our patients and our practices.

As we look to the future, it is imperative that we continue to create and demonstrate value to our patients. We must continue striving to exceed expectations. We must work smarter, not harder, by embracing technology that truly works for us. Practice efficiencies and patient workflows must be maximized for us to remain profitable. Marco and the TRS help us to achieve all of these objectives. 🌟

**Dr. Rice** is managing partner of Vision Clinic, a four-location practice based in southwest Missouri. He is also a Diplomate of the American Board of Optometry, and a Vision Source Administrator (15 years), as well as a past Missouri Optometric Association Optometrist of the Year. His passion for the profession has been passed on to his children — fourth-year and second-year students at the Southern College of Optometry.

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