

Communication & psychology: The bread and butter of a successful clinic

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Considering the sheer volume of eyes we see in our lifetimes as optometrists, we can consider ourselves eye connoisseurs. Although eyes are in the center of our profession, an important organ has been notoriously overshadowed: the brain. The brain is just as important as the eyes, when we're trying to achieve a successful contact lens fitting.

During my time as the chief optometrist at Kontaktlinse Institutet in Copenhagen, I've had the opportunity investigate what a successful fitting and clinic needs. I quickly discovered the red thread: communication is key. If the patient understands their refraction, our work and the journey, we significantly decrease the risk of a drop out. Whether we're dealing with an experienced contact lens wearer or a brand new one, it is detrimental for the wearer to understand their refraction and their eyes. Almost none of the patients I see daily have a clear understanding of what their refraction means. If our patients know and understand their refractions it makes expectation alignment seamless and easier. Once we've established an understanding of the patient's vision, our next step is to relate this information to the patient's visual needs. Expectation management is a negative experience if it comes from a place of confusion. When a patient understands the limitations and challenges of their correction, it automatically enlightens a new dimension of their experiences and vision. It is important to highlight the fact that a contact lens correction is rarely a one-and-done progress. Specially regarding our presbyopic patients. The onset of presbyopia is often frustrating and leaves our patients facing a new handicap. It is a new and permanent reminder of and older age. Patients handle presbyopia very differently. Understanding your patient gives you the advantage of taking control of the narrative. Wanting a perfect and quick solution to a new frustrating problem is natural, however it isn't necessarily realistic. Prepare your patient for the journey that a contact lens fitting is. Encourage your patient to be observant, picky and honest. Use their pickiness to your advantage. If we don't continuously monitor our patients experiences and opinions on the journey and correction we might overlook potential for an avoidable drop out.

Ensuing the patient that they're in the drivers seat with us, gives them a sense of investment in the process. They'll maneuver more confidently through the journey and will feel an equal sense of responsibility in regard to the contact lens fitting being a success. Holding the patient to a high standard by establishing a responsibility of active communication will do wonders. In conclusion, we should not be afraid to demand responsibility from our patients. By doing this they respect and understand our work. The patient, specialist, eyes and brain play an equal role in a successful fitting.