

Elevate your patients experience in the clinic

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Regular checkups are important due to multiple factors. Monitoring the eye health and sight of our patients is our primary focus and also the primary motivation behind our patients visits in our clinics. Considering that we see multiple patients everyday it is easy to lose sight of the potential point of view of our patients. We have numerous patients, but our patients usually only have one optometrist. Therefore, it is essential to establish a relationship with our patients on an individual basis.

I regularly catch myself blinded by my knowledge. I may oversee the fact that I cannot expect my patient to fully understand my terminology, the anatomy or my explanation regarding a problem that they're facing. This halts the development of the patient-practitioner relationship. I must ensure that the patient feels comfortable enough to bring their worries, problems and questions into my clinic. My primary goal, in relation to establishing a relationship with my patient, is ensuring that my patient is seen and feels seen.

The questions and worries that our patients have, may only be the tip of the iceberg for them. There are questions that they are embarrassed to ask and questions that they do not know that they can ask. A classic example could be the new, or even experienced patient, accepting a lackluster contact lens comfortability experience due to the misconception that contact lenses shouldn't feel comfortable past a certain hour of wear time. When asked "are you happy with your lenses and their level of comfort?" the answer might be "yes" simply because the patient hasn't experienced anything different or because they don't know that it might be something that can be improved.

Here are some examples of questions and tips that will elevate the patients experience in the clinic.

Explain the steps during their checkup

Years of contact lens use and numerous visits to the clinic doesn't necessarily translate to patients understanding of what we do during these visits. Explain to the patient why we blur their vision down in the beginning stages of the sight test. It is one of the most frequently asked questions by children in my clinic. Taking the curiosity and lack of embarrassment there comes with being a child, I began explaining the process to adults as well. The usual response is "wow, I've always wondered why you do that".

Explaining what the slit lamp enables us to examine and potentially showing the patient by using the camera setting could be a great example.

Ask you patients about they ocular habits

Sunglasses: Asking my patients weather or not they wear sunglasses regularly is a standard question, yet many of our patients may not know of the benefits of wearing sunglasses. Informing the patients of such benefits adds a new layer to their experience. It is no longer another question in the line of questions, but rather a point that is made.

Make-up: "How do you usually remove your make-up?" is a question that always surprises my new patients. They usually quickly say "I always take my lenses out first" maybe thinking that the question is a contact lens isolated question, however I'm more interested in learning about what products and methods that are used when removing make-up. If I observe mascara leftovers between the lashes from previous days, while examining the patients in the clinic, I suggest adding a Q-Tip to their make-up removal routine so that the last little bit of mascara can be taken off. Using the camera setting in the slit lamp I take pictures and show the patient for their better understanding.

Ask you patient how they feel

This one is probably the most difficult one. There are plenty of relevant questions to ask and there are equally as many irrelevant questions to ask. If I'm faced with difficulty and uncertainty during my examination, I always ask my patient about their stress levels and sleeping habits lately. It's an easier question to ask when you're asking in regard to your examination. This question is always relevant yet not always easy to ask. Once it's asked successfully and answered it is easy to circle back to the question during future visits.

